MARATHAS AND PANIPAT

HARI RAM GUPTA

" Sowing their lives for her seed ;

That their dust might rebuild her a nation;

That their souls might relight her a star".

—Mrs. BROWNING

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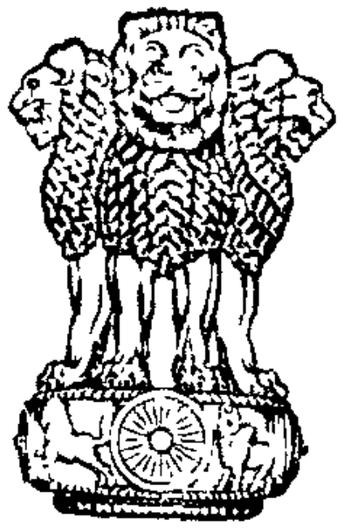
DEDICATED to the memory of all those, high and low, young and old, rich and poor, the gallant sons and daughters of Maharashtra, who laid down their lives in the service of liberty, religion and nation.

"It is a day of memories; a day when we meet in the hallowed past and hold communion with our holy dead; a day when we recall the glorious aspirations which thrilled men's souls in that heroic time when to love one's country was to lay down one's life; a day filled with that same spirit of freedom, patriotism, and devotion which breathed into the common dust of ordinary humanity the sublime inspiration of heroic deeds!"

—Anonymous

14 January 1961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RAJ BHAVAN
CHANDIGARH
14-1-1961

FOREWORD

A few months ago I visited Kala Amb where the Third Battle of Panipat was fought between the Marathas and Ahmad Shah Abdali. It struck me that on the 14*th January,* 1961, 200 *years would have passed since the fateful battle was fought. I thought that it would be a good idea if on this occasion a volume embodying a review of the events that led to the battle and its aftermath was made available for the public. It should be based on available sources including those which have come into light during the last* 15 *years. There are already several books written on the Third Battle of Panipat, particularly in Persian and Marathi languages. Understandably there has been no unanimity on the causes and consequences of the Third Battle of Panipat. Before independence many historians in India wrote from such sources as were available to them on Mughal rule and the period in which the Third Battle of Panipat was fought and were under a great handicap, since Government records were generally not available to them. A number of books, bakharas and memoirs have been collected, some of them published and most of them are in Persian. The Bharat Itihasik Samsodhak Mandal, Poona, the first and foremost institution in historical research, has published during the last* 50 *years many brochures and books on Maratha history. The Battle of Panipat also has been dealt with by various historians in Maharashtra.*

2. *The present volume has for its sources all that has been available to the historians before India became independent*

and such others as came to light during the last 12 *years. Even in modern times, one cannot be sure that one is accurate and adequate in the matter of current events even when sources are plentiful and public. It is still more difficult to be accurate when one has to deal with events that took place some two hundred years ago when press was unknown and newspapers non-existent. One has to be content with such material as correspondence, memoirs, etc. as may be available. It will not be wrong to say that during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, no state considered it worth while to preserve records in a systematic way, much less to encourage review and writing on matters past and contemporary. Now that the country has become independent, Governments, both Central and State, are encouraging archaeological and historical research to a considerable extent. More research is necessary before one can write history of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries with anything like accuracy or adequacy. No historian can be hundred per-cent accurate since it is impossible for him to get hundred per cent accurate and adequate data. But it must be the constant aspiration of a fair-minded historian to continue his search for truth. Viewed in this light, this book is an attempt to give a fair and a dispassionate account of the Third Battle of Panipat. The role of a historian is to be detached and dispassionate. It is not for him to assume certain things and try to adjust facts or marshal events from that point of view. The historian should not be bound to a particular frame of reference; he must have freedom. Data is sacred, comment is free. In the present volume it will be found that the compilation has been made with a fair measure of detachment and the comments made on events are, at any rate, sans malice.*

3. *The volume is divided into three parts. The first part gives the background of the Third Battle of Panipat. A review of events which played significant part during the* 20 *years preceding it will certainly help the reader to appreciate the combi-*

nation of forces which ultimately resulted in the Battle of Panipat on 14th January, 1761. It is doubtful to what extent the principal parties that occupied the stage of history during these 20 years were actuated by other than mundane motives. Was there anything like a feeling of nationhood ? Was there any party actuated to preserve the security of India as a whole during this period? It is difficult to answer this question categorically. There is no doubt, however, that there was a feeling of loyalty towards the central power at Delhi although loyalties differed in terms of personalities representing the central power. The Marathas even showed that sense of loyalty and there is plenty of evidence to justify this statement. In one of his letters despatched from Delhi, Bajirao the First on the eve of his proposed assault on Delhi wrote that he changed his mind and did not attack Delhi because he considered the State at Delhi a senior branch and felt that it would be wrong on his part to attack it. There is evidence to show that every call from imperial Delhi to come to its protection was helpfully responded by the Marathas from the south. It will be wrong to conclude that the Marathas came to north every time for the pleasure of loot or for the collection of Chauth. Another fact which is of great significance during this period is that both the parties were helped by Hindus and Mussalman princes irrespective of religious consideration. There was a definite feeling that the Maratha power at Delhi was a bulwark against invasions from the north-west and the anxiety to help was indeed there throughout and yet it is also clear that there was nobody who could unite all the princes and powers in northern India against the invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali.

Part II of the volume deals with the actual campaign and the position of the fighting armies. The narrative is obviously based on such sources as were available.

Part III is, as it is rightly termed, the Sequel. The views expressed are no doubt based on data available and it is

possible that certain conclusions may not be acceptable to every one, but I could say that to the extent possible an attitude of detachment and dispassion has been fairly maintained. The volume is an honest attempt to deal with the Third Battle of Panipat from its causes to consequences and should stimulate interest in further study of the subject, on which surely the last word has not been written. It is, in my view, the duty of the Universities, no less than that of the Governments, to encourage historical research. No nation can afford to neglect its history except to its great disadvantage , for a better understanding of the past provides a better guide for the future than complacency, prejudices, illusions and conceits.

PREFACE

In the history of India there are a few big battles to which people can look back and say: There, the course of history was changed. The Battle of Mahabharata, the Battle of Taraori, and the three Battles of Panipat may be included in this category. All of these were fought in the region where hymns of the great Vedas and the song celestial of the Gita were composed and sung. But the Third Battle of Panipat was certainly the greatest soul-shaking event of modern times.

It was for the first time in 1758 A.D. after about 750 years that the Land of the Sapt Sindhu extending from the river Jamuna in the east to the river Kabul on the west had passed under the control of Indians. This battle was fought to preserve Indian authority in these regions, to make India safe from foreign invasions, to secure the sacred places of Hinduism from cow-slaughter, and occasional outbursts of religious fanaticism, and to regain that political power which had been lost by our ancestors several centuries ago.

Keene is absolutely wrong in asserting that the Marathas wanted "to drive the Musalmans out of Hindustan". [*Madhav Rao Sindhia*, 35.] Not to speak of any expulsion they never converted any Muslim to Hinduism. Even their own children by a Muslim wife were treated as Muslims. Peshwa Bajirao's son by Mastani, Shamsher Bahadur, was considered a Muslim. In spite of Bajirao's infatuation for her, Mastani was persuaded to remain a Muslim. The fact is that the Maratha movement was purely political. Religion was not combined with it.

The Mughals, Afghans and Rohillas did not consider themselves Indians. If this had not been the case, they should not have recruited thousands and thousands of Central Asian people in their armies and in civil services in preference to Indians both Hindus and Muslims. Besides, they should not have invited foreign hordes to crush every Indian nationalist movement, which aimed at benefiting all the sons of the soil irrespective of any consideration for caste, creed or religion. Even the celebrated scholar and theologian of Delhi, Shah

Waliullah, used all his power and influence to persuade Ahmad Shah Durrani to destroy the Marathas, the Jats, and the Sikhs.

The Battle of Panipat was actually a contest between the Marathas and Najib-ud-daulah. Some writers, however, allege that it was a struggle for supremacy between Hindus and Muslims. The Marathas fought alone. None of the Hindu political powers of the time joined or co-operated with them. The Naga Gosains, the most ferocious and valiant Hindu ascetics, in the service of Shuja-ud-daulah of Avadh desperately fought against the Marathas even before the battle. Ahirs of Mewat looted Maratha stragglers. Some of the Hindu Jats and Gujars of the Panipat region robbed and plundered many fleeing Marathas after the battle.

The reason is plain and simple. In the eighteenth century Hinduism was completely dominated by the caste system. Acceptance of a tumbler of water by a Hindu from a Hindu of a lower caste in many cases meant defilement and social degradation. Caste was the main factor which determined one's status in society. In the social and economic system of Hindu society there was no basis for unity, and Hinduism provided no foundation for the brotherhood of man. Similarly in the political field the relations of one Hindu state with another Hindu power were governed by competition rather than co-operation. They seldom worked collectively, while individually they were almost always defeated both in diplomacy and in arms. Consequently, Hindu unity was an illusion for the Marathas and a delusion for the Muslims.

Islam, on the other hand, has nearly always been a unifying force. 'Religion in danger' has ever been a powerful cry to rally round even the most conflicting group loyalties. The political and economic Muslim groups expressed their common problems in the language of religion, and not in the language of the country which they had adopted as their home. To religious fanaticism was added the material and psychological frustration of the Muslims due to the new imperialism issuing from the south and trying to dominate the north.

This gave rise to bitter antagonism and animosities. As a result of the forces dominating Hinduism, Marathas remained to fight in the national cause single-handed. Najib-ud-daulah, on the other hand, won over not only all the Muslim chiefs of northern India but also the greatest Muslim conqueror and general of the age, Ahmad Shah Durrani.

In a way it may be called a contest between Hinduism and Islam, the former being represented by Marathas and the latter by one individual, Najib-ud-daulah. It was not the fault of the Marathas that the Rajputs, the Jats, and the Sikhs or even Ahirs did not join them. It was the defect of Hinduism. Similarly, it was not the virtue of Najib-ud-daulah that all the Muslim powers all around had joined him. It was the excellence of Islam.

It did not matter much that the battle of Panipat was lost. To win the battle was not to win the war. The Marathas were crushed, but they could not be destroyed. Heads of the people present in the field were cut off, but the hearts of the nation remained unsubdued. Bullets and swords could kill persons, but they could not kill ideas. The extermination of the faithful could not be the same thing as the extirpation of a faith. The dead and the dying on the battle-field remained no longer soldiers and camp followers. They became martyrs. And the blood of the martyrs is never shed in vain. It serves as seed for future victories. The battle against the foreign invader was no doubt lost by the Marathas; but the war against him was won by their Sikh brethren within a decade after this battle. Even the Marathas also rose again inside the same decade, and recovered most of their lost ground.

As each age asks new questions, and wants evaluation afresh and assessment anew of its past history; and as Panjab was directly concerned with the causes and the effects of this mighty upheaval which took place on its soil, it was most appropriate for the Panjab Government to sponsor this volume in commemoration of the bi-centenary of the great battle. But the time given to the Editor was rather short, and he and his collaborators could not do full justice to the topics chosen by them although they very much wished to do so.

Hence we do not claim much originality. Yet an attempt has been made to give this book a touch of vividness and pictures-queness. We have also tried to keep both narrative and language as simple as possible. We have also endeavoured to make our statement, as far as it goes, logical and complete.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the Maratha penetration into northern India. It consists of thirteen chapters. The narrative is based mainly on contemporary Persian, Marathi and Hindi sources as well as on the recent works of Sir Jadunath Sarkar and Padma Bhushan Dr. G. S. Sardesai.

We have concentrated, as is inevitable, upon the history of the Marathas, but we have tried to tell their history as part of the wider history of India and with relevant references to Central Asian history, owing to the influence exerted by it on the history of this country.

The rise and development of numerous powers closely connected with the history of the Marathas, such as Ahmad Shah Durrani, Najib-ud-daulah, the trans-Ganga Rohillas, the Nawabs of Avadh, the Bangash Afghans of Farrukhabad, the Jats, some of the Rajput princes and to a certain extent of the Sikhs is sketched in its proper setting, keeping in view the melodrama of the fall of the Mughal Empire.

"The Panipat Campaign" covering six chapters forms the second part. It has been drawn upon, in addition to contemporary Persian and Marathi material, on the learned works of Sarkar, Sardesai, Sen and Shejwalkar. The third part or "The Sequel" contains eight chapters. Causes of the Maratha defeat and consequences of the battle are described in two chapters. The next chapter entitled "Had the Marathas Won!" is based much on fact and little on fiction. The field work in Panipat region shows that all the places connected with the battle can be completely traced. The whole scene is fraught with associations of deep interest. But the spot which awakens our sympathy and excites our feelings most of all, is that where Bhau himself fought and fell. A chapter on "Maratha Settlers in Panjab" embodies the result of visits to a number of places and interviews with nearly a hundred persons. The services rendered by Raja Alha Singh of Patiala to the Marathas at Panipat at the time of their dire need are discussed in a chapter on "Marathas and the Sikhs". "Role of Saharanpur" clearly brings out the importance of the district which belonged to Najib-ud-daulah. The last chapter on the "Role of Delhi" traces the causes and effects of numerous revolutions and counter-revolutions which occurred in the unfortunate imperial capital during this period, and which exercised deep influence on the rise and fall of the Maratha power in the North. It also describes the touching observations of two contemporary great Urdu poets, the residents of the city, Mir Dard and Sauda.

In the end, I tender my grateful thanks to my esteemed colleagues and collaborators for their valuable contributions; to the staff of National Library, Calcutta, Panjab University Library, Chandigarh, and Khalsa College Sikh History Research Library, Amritsar, for

their willing co-operation and assistance; to Shri G. H. Khare of Bharat Itihasik Samsodhak Mandal, Poona, for his kindly supplying a good deal of fresh material from Marathi sources, and Dr. P.K. Sircar and Shri O. P. Sarna, of the Geography Department, for their kindly preparing five sketches of the battle.

I express my gratitude to Dr. A. C. Joshi, Vice-Chancellor, Panjab University, for his kindly approving of all my recommendations made in this connection. My hearty thanks are also due to Shri P. N. Varma, Job Manager, the Tribune Press, Ambala, who printed the whole book along with more than a score of illustrations and maps in about a fortnight.

I am principally and most deeply indebted to Shri N. V. Gadgil, the popular and history-minded Governor of Panjab, who is a scholar and statesman, simple yet strong, sweet but also stern, who is the originator and patron of this volume, and without whose constant active support, this book would not have seen the light of day.

CHANDIGARH
14 *January* 1961

HARI RAM GUPTA

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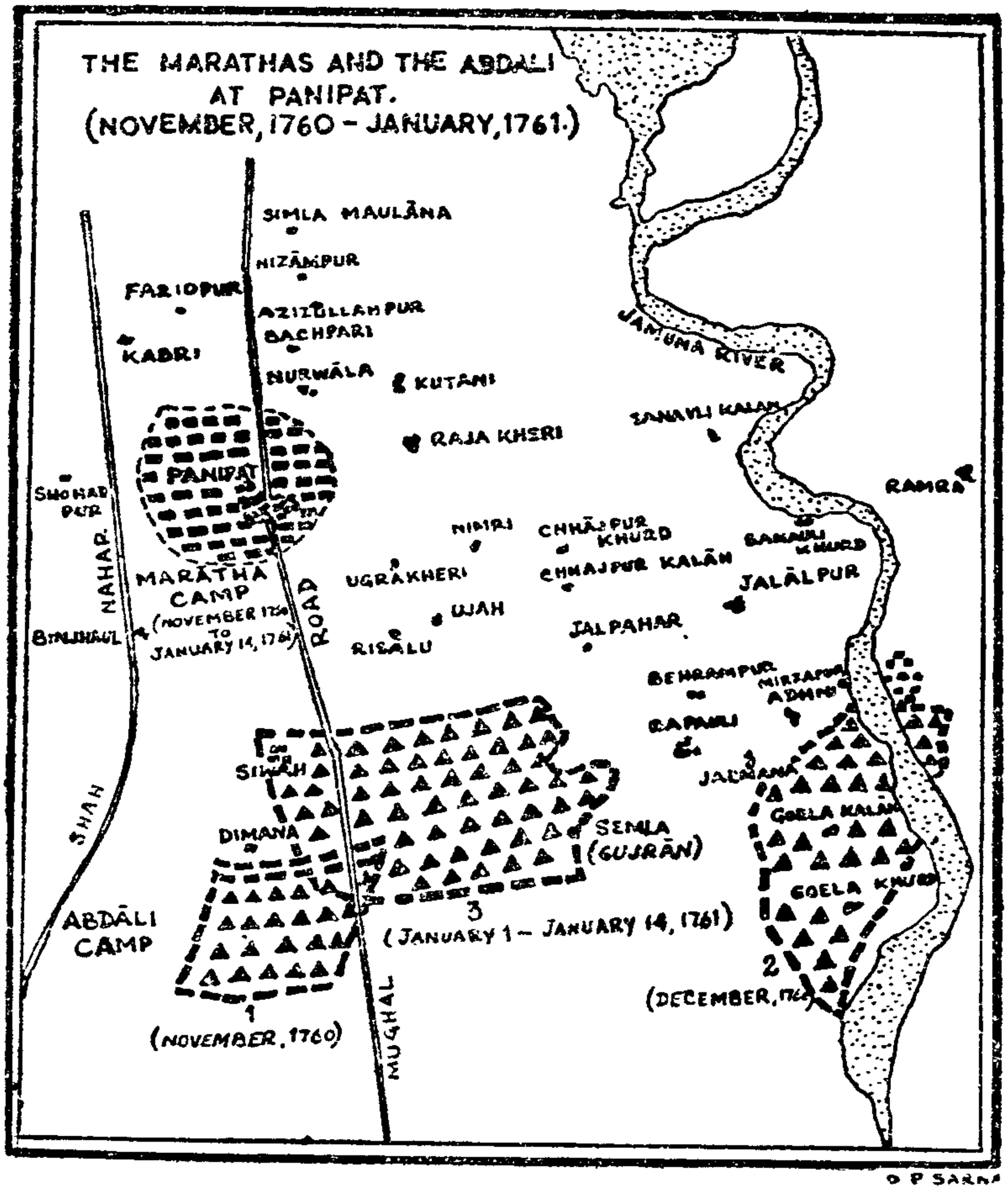
PART ONE

MARATHAS IN THE NORTH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AT PANIPAT.
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NIZĀMPUR
FARIDPUR
AZIZULLAHPUR
BACHPARI
KABRI
NURWĀLA
KUTANI
RAJA KHERI
PANIPAT
SHOHAR PUR
NAHAR
MARĀTHA CAMP
(NOVEMBER 1760 TO JANUARY 14, 1761)
ROAD
BIHLIHAUL
UGRĀKHERI
NIMRI
CHHĀJPUR KHURD
CHHAJPUR KALĀN
UJAH
RISĀLU
JALPAHAR
JAMUNA RIVER
SANAULI KALAN
RAMRA
BAKAULI KHURD
JALĀLPUR
BEHRAMPUR
MIRZAPUR ADHNA
KAMALI
JALALANA
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MAP
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DISTRICT KARNAL
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MUZAFFARNAGAR
MERUT
JAMNA
WESTERN JAMNA CANAL
TO AMBALA
PANIPAT
RAZAPUR
SITHANAH
ASAN KALAN
SIKANDAR PUR
KABRI
FARID PUR
BABAU
NAGLAH
DHANSOLI
SANAULI KALAN
NAWADAH
KUTANI
RAJAH KHERI
MOHALI
KURAR
SANAULI KHURD
THANAS ABAR
JANBAH
JALAL PUR
RISHPUR
NALHERAH
SUTANAH
JATOL
SHONDA PUR
NIMRI
KHURD
JALKANRI
RISALU
UJAON
BINJHOL
BHADAUR
KHERI NANGAL
RASLA PUR
BAHRAM PUR
ADHPI
DAHAR
SIWAH
DHADHAULI
BAPOLI
JALMANAH
NUR PUR GUJARAN
PASINAH KHURD
PASINAH KALAN
HARTARI
DIWANA
GOYLIH KALAN
BAHLOR
BURSHAM
JHATIPUR
BHOL
BADHI
TAJ PUR
GOLAH KHRD
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TAHAR PUR
DIDWAR
BALANAR
PAHLAD PUR
SHAHRMAL PUR
BEGAM PUR
RAYMAL
NARYANA
FALRI
MANANAH
KARHANS
JORASI KHALSA
MATHAULI
KHOJGI PUR
MANDI
DHOD PUR
BHAB PURAH
ATAH
BHANDOL
JORASI SIRF KHAS
PAWTI
GUWALERA
KEWANAH
CHAMRARAH
OHIKADLA
HATWALA
PATTIKALYANAH
DEHRAH
FIROZ PUR
KARKOLI
MAHAWTI
BASAHRAH
RAKAS HLRA
BUCHAN PUR

SADASHIVRAO BHAU

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CHAPTER I

DECAY OF THE MUGHAL COURT

Introductory

Under Aurangzeb the Mughal Empire had reached its zenith. It stretched from Hindkoh (formerly called Hindukush) in the north nearly to the extreme south, and from Assam in the east to the Arabian sea in the west . Such a vast expanse of the Indian sub-continent in a unified central government had been organized only once before two thousand years ago under the Mauryan Emperors.

The results of this unique achievement could not be sustained by Aurangzeb's successors. As a matter of fact the forces of disruption had raised their head in the life-time of this great Emperor. He tried his level best to suppress them, but failed to do so in the face of myriads of rebels rising on all sides.

On Aurangzeb's death in 1707 A.D. the decline of the Mughal Empire began, and its speed went on accelerating as the time passed by. In fifty years' time the administrative machinery of this huge empire broke down. Finances fell into complete chaos and confusion. Army became demoralized. Disintegration of the empire continued with great rapidity. By 1761 effete rule of the Mughal Emperors was confined only to the imperial capital of Delhi and its environs*.

Aurangzeb's Successors

Aurangzeb was succeeded by his eldest son Mu'azzam entitled Bahadur Shah. He had won the throne after the bloody battle of Jajau with his brother 'Azam. The new Emperor, then sixty-four years old, had suffered greatly from the effects of the suspicious nature of his father who fearing a rebellion against himself had given him little training in the art of government. Bahadur Shah ruled for five years. During this period, the prestige of his father, and not his own ability, held the empire. Though a kind and just ruler, he wielded no influence on administration, and rightly earned the nickname of *Shah-e-Bekhabar* or the 'Heedless King'.

---

*"*Badshah Shah Alam*
Az Delhi ta Palam."

His death in 1712 was followed by a scramble for the throne among various claimants. In consequence his eldest son was proclaimed emperor with the title of Jahandar Shah. He was indolent, careless, lewd,* and licentious, besides being a coward†. He was defeated and done to death after a disgraceful rule of eleven months.‡

Farrukh Siyar was the next emperor. He possessed no resolution, constancy or character. He enjoyed the company of low and vile people, destitute of merit and morals, and upon them he freely bestowed offices, which they did not know how to manage, and presents which they did not know what to do with.§ In 1719 he was first blinded and then strangled to death by the famous Sayyid brothers. On his death they tried in quick succession two weakly sprigs of the royal house. Rafi-ud-darjat was the first to be crowned. He died after a brief reign of three months. His elder brother Rafi-ud-daulah was then raised to the throne. He also passed away after a short rule of three months.¶

Muhammad Shah's accession to the throne in 1719 seems to have restored to the Mughal throne some sort of stability, as he ruled for nearly thirty years. In this period though there were no civil wars in the imperial family, the Emperor failed to arrest the process of decay and disintegration. The new Emperor was at the time of his succession a raw youth of seventeen, and utterly lacked decision and enterprise. He had been in confinement in the palace for seven years and so had received no education or training in administration. He was extremely handsome, of a strong and splendid build and was endowed with natural intelligence and foresight. But actuated by his youthful passions, pride and

---

*He became so dead to all feelings of shame and honour that while passing through the bazars, he seized the wives and daughters of the people. [*Khushhalchand*, iii, 34a.]

†He was terrified at the sight of a naked dagger or sword. On one occasion, he had run away from a place forgetting his slippers and his turban falling off the head. [Latif, *History of the Panjab*, 182-3.]

‡After his defeat he fled from the field on an elephant with his mistress Lal Kanwar. Then he got himself clean shaved, and in the guise of a farmer travelled with Lal Kanwar in a bullock cart. He was arrested and killed. [*A History of the Freedom Movement* in Pakistan, i, 88].

§*Siyar*, ii, 21.

¶*Bayan*, 170. Harcharandas accuses the Sayyids of having poisoned both the brothers. [*Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 384a.]

prejudices, he resigned himself to frivolous pursuits and to the company of vulgar and wicked persons. He paid no heed whatsoever to government, and everything went to rack and ruin. A certain girl named Koki, the daughter of a *faqir*, had fascinated Muhammad Shah so much that she was entrusted by the Emperor with the imperial seal and personal signet. She issued orders in her own name and signed state papers. Not even the prime minister of the realm could see the Emperor except through her*.

Muhammad Shah died in 1748 and his only son Ahmad Shah, aged twenty-one years, ascended the throne. His mother was Udhambai, originally a dancing girl, who possessed such charm and beauty that Muhammad Shah had raised her to the position of a queen. Even in the palace she never got rid of her loose character, and several times fell under royal displeasure. Her intimacy with her personal servant, Javid Khan, had become a great scandal. Against all previous usage and practice Javid Khan began to sleep in the royal harem. The royal guards once staged a very interesting scene. They tied up a young ass and a bitch at the palace gate, probably on a day of the public darbar. When the nobles and other courtiers came to attend the court, they audaciously urged them saying: "First make your bow to these. This one (pointing to the ass) is the Nawab Bahadur (Javid Khan) and that (the bitch) is Hazrat Qudsia, the Queen-mother."†

Ahmad Shah was a true son of his parents. He had been given no education or training in the art of government. The sudden rise to unbridled power led him on to a dissolute course of life. He fell into bad company, and wine and women became his ruling passion.‡ He was dethroned, blinded and beheaded by his Wazir, Imad-ul-mulk, in 1754.

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*About this state of things Nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Jah, then Prime Minister of the Mughal Empire, wrote a quatrain, the last verse of which meant: "What else can men do but throw dust on their heads , as today a woman sits in place of Aurangzeb?" On hearing this she immediately composed two distiches in reply: "It is a strange phenomenon that hens have occupied the place of (imperial) cocks. Probably the ignoble sky may dance in a fit of joy, as it has fallen to the lot of drummers to ply swords." [*Khushhalchand*, iii, 28a; *Sarkar*, i, 16-7.]

†*Shakir*, 34-5; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 40; *Sarkar*, i, 335-6.

‡*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 34-5; *Bayan*, 174; *Siyar*, iii, 27.

Alamgir II succeeded Ahmad Shah. He was fifty-five years old, and had been leading a life of penury, privacy and paltriness since 1713. Thus he had spent over forty years of retired life in religious devotion and study of books, especially of history. He came to the throne with the determination to work as strenuously and carefully as his great-grandfather Aurangzeb, whose title he had imitated. But he singularly failed in his aims because of his failing health, weak character, incapacity for leadership, and the overriding influence of his Wazir Imad-ul-mulk*.

The Wazirs

In a country where the king is both absolute and incapable or imbecile, the interests of the people and the government can only be conserved by an able and responsible prime minister. But the irony of fate seems to have worked its way even in this case. For the ministers of the later Mughals, though in many cases energetic and skilful, were deeply influenced by the evil example of their masters, or despairing of their trust, deliberately neglected the affairs of the state. Mun'im Khan, the minister of Bahadur Shah, allowed the state affairs to drift with temporary relief, without finding the proper and final solution of the problems. He died in 1711, and his master before appointing his successor followed him to the grave in 1712. Jahandar Shah appointed Zulfiqar Khan his wazir. This man, though a renowned soldier and statesman, left the affairs of the state to his favourite Raja Sobhachand†.

Farrukh Siyar conferred this post on Sayyid Abdullah Khan, one of the well-known Sayyid brothers. The Emperor soon turned against him, and the Wazir's energy and ability proved of no value. He gave himself up to pleasure and plotting, leaving the affairs of the government to Diwan Ratanchand‡.

Sayyid Abdullah Khan was overthrown by Muhammad Shah who appointed Amin Khan his Wazir. He died after a month and a half §. Nizam-ul-mulk succeeded him. But as Muhammad Shah gave him little support, and even initiated conspiracies against him, the clever and capable minister, finding that administrative vigour and honesty meant his own ruin, resigned in disgust in 1724. Amin

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**Sarkar*, ii, 1-5.
†*Irvine*, i, 197, 257.
‡*Siyar*, ii, 21.
§*Bayan*, 171.

Khan's son Qamr-ud-din Khan held this office from 1724 to 1748. He was an extremely indolent man given to enjoyment of sensual pleasures.* The master and the minister alike indulged in their selfish pursuits caring nothing for administration. Whenever the news about the Maratha, Rohilla or Jat encroachment upon imperial territory came, the Emperor and his Wazir, in order to soothe their afflicted heart, would go out to hunt or gaze at the lotuses in pools and fish in ponds, spending months in tents.

Safdar Jang, the new Prime Minister, was the leader of the Irani party, and his sole aim was to weaken the rival Turani party which, for the past forty years, had held the helm of affairs of the Mughal Empire. His selfish and one-sided policy hastened the fall of the empire. His greatest opponent was Javid Khan, the paramour of the Queen-mother. In a fit of rage and exasperation Safdar Jang got Javid Khan beheaded. Thereupon Ahmad Shah and his mother both turned against the minister, and drove him out of office in 1753.

Intizam-ud-daulah, the eldest son of late Qamr-ud-din Khan, became the wazir. He was thoroughly lazy and incompetent. He was expelled after fifteen months. Imad-ul-mulk, grandson of Nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Jah, a lad of seventeen years, was invested with this high office. He was at his best in intrigues and plots. "There has never been a wazir of Delhi whose rule was so barren of good result and so full of misery to himself and to the empire, to his friends and foes alike, as Imad-ul-mulk's."†

The Mughal Aristocracy

The deterioration in the character of the Mughal aristocracy was going apace with the general all-round degeneration of the Mughal character. From the death of Aurangzeb to the accession of Muhammad Shah (1707—19) within a period of twelve years, seven bloody battles of succession took place. These swept away the ranks of a large number of princes, warlike nobles and renowned soldiers. The armed contest between rival nobles caused further havoc in the destruction of noteworthy officers and warriors. These

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**Maasir-ul-umara*, i, 359; *Siyar*, iii, 9.

"Ghaflat shuār wa hamesha mast bāda-e-khushgawār me bud."

(*Siyar*, iii, 25.]"He was negligent and always tipsy."

†*Sarkar*, ii, 6.

losses continued unabated in the contests with Marathas, Rohillas, Rajputs, Jats and Sikhs. Besides, the bad example of the emperors and wazirs was literally followed by the courtiers. Luxurious living and criminal negligence of their duty became their ideal.

Thus the progeny of the Mughal nobility who were once the main prop of the mighty Mughal Empire sank into sloth and sensuality. Though they retained their family intelligence and culture, yet none of them possessed any capacity for leadership and ability in civil or military administration. They utterly lacked strength of will, vigour of mind, and clarity of vision. Their outward elegance served as a showy and deceptive covering. Underneath it lay hidden their overriding ambition and mean selfishness. They possessed no love for mankind and no interest in the country or nation. They were thoroughly immoral and self-seekers.

Party Factions at the Court

The process of enervation which had already set in, was further accentuated by the mutual wrangles of the court nobles. Party factions had arisen in the Imperial Court of Delhi immediately after the death of Aurangzeb; but they assumed a crystallised form during the reign of Farrukh Siyar. The Sayyid brothers were at the helm of all state affairs, and the Emperor was merely a puppet in their hands. This he did not like, because he could not give free vent to his low desires and ambitions. Hence he gathered around him a company of friends who always opposed and intrigued against the Sayyids. Thus there came into existence two parties which were generally called the Emperor's friends and the Wazir's friends.

In the long reign of Muhammad Shah (1719–48), these party factions took a rather serious turn. They appeared in a more developed form, and the struggle between them became intensely acute. In consequence of extreme incapacity on the part of the Emperor and utter sloth and supineness on that of the Wazir, enmities rapidly sprang up. As a matter of fact it had become almost necessary for the nobles to form parties in order to secure advancement, and, in many cases, even to maintain their existence.

There were generally two parties. The Irani party represented Iranis of the Shia persuasion; while the Turani party comprised in the main Sunnis of the same Central Asian stock to which the Mughal Emperors belonged. The Iranis possessed superior intelligence and polished manners. They were well-versed in revenue

affairs and in the administration of civil departments and the secretariat. The Turanis, on the contrary, excelled in fighting capacity and power of commanding and controlling armies. The struggle between the two grew more acute each day, till matters came to such a pass, particularly in the reign of Ahmad Shah, that the rise of one meant the ruin of the other*.

Break-up of the Empire

The inevitable result of such a state of affairs was that the respect and awe which the imperial name used to inspire in the hearts of men in power and position and in the minds of common-folk disappeared. Everyone of consequence cherished ambition of acquiring more and more power and of assuming independence. Nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Jah, the Mughal viceroy of the Deccan, declared his independence, and laid the foundation of the Haidarabad House in 1724. In the same year S'aadat Khan became viceroy of Avadh and ruled almost independently for all practical purposes. A few years later the viceroy of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa threw off his allegiance to Delhi.

This state of affairs tempted the foreign invaders. In 1739 Nadir Shah seized Afghanistan and the entire trans-Indus territory. Ahmad Shah Durrani conquered the provinces of Lahore, Multan, Kashmir and Sarhind. He thus extended his dominions to the neighbourhood of Delhi.

Besides these, the people also began to rise. The Sikhs raised their head in the north. The Rohilla Afghans made themselves master of a rich and fertile tract situated to the north of the Ganga, which came to be known after their name as Rohilkhand. The Jats carved out an independent principality in the close proximity of the imperial capitals of Delhi and Agra. But the most rapid strides in acquiring power were made by the Marathas to whose story we now turn.

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*Gupta, *Studies in Later Mughal History of the Panjab*, 22-3.

CHAPTER II

MARATHA DOMINATION OF THE EMPIRE

Shahu and his Policy

Marathas are the inhabitants of Maharashtra, a region roughly marked by a triangle with the coast line between Daman and Goa as its base and Nagpur as its apex. Originally belonging to the peasantry stock, they recruited themselves in the armies of Muslim kings of the south. It was their national hero Shivaji who converted them into a military nation. Even during Aurangzeb's reign the Marathas had successfully checked the expansion of the Mughal rule in their own country. In 1674 Shivaji assumed the title of Raja. He died in 1680. His eldest son Sambhaji and his family were captured by Aurangzeb in 1689. Sambhaji was put to death, but his seven-year old son, Shahu, was preserved and brought up in the court. Shivaji's younger son, Rajaram, became the head of the Maratha state.

Shahu was released in 1707 apparently to create dissensions among the Marathas. His mother, wives and some other relatives were sent to Delhi as hostages. Shahu was opposed by his aunt Tarabai, but he managed to crown himself in January 1708. In order to end the civil war Shahu divided the Maratha kingdom into two halves. The territory lying to the south of river Krishna was surrendered to Tarabai who established her seat at Kolhapur. Shahu maintained his headquarters at Satara. Shahu now commanded only a small area, but he was free to extend his dominions to the north.*

Young men encouraged to go North

In this task Shahu was greatly assisted by Balaji Vishwanath, a Chitpavan Brahman from Konkan. He had served Shahu since 1707 so ably and devotedly that Shahu entrusted the conduct of all state affairs to him. He was appointed Peshwa in 1713. Balaji maintained his office at Poona, though he frequently attended Shahu

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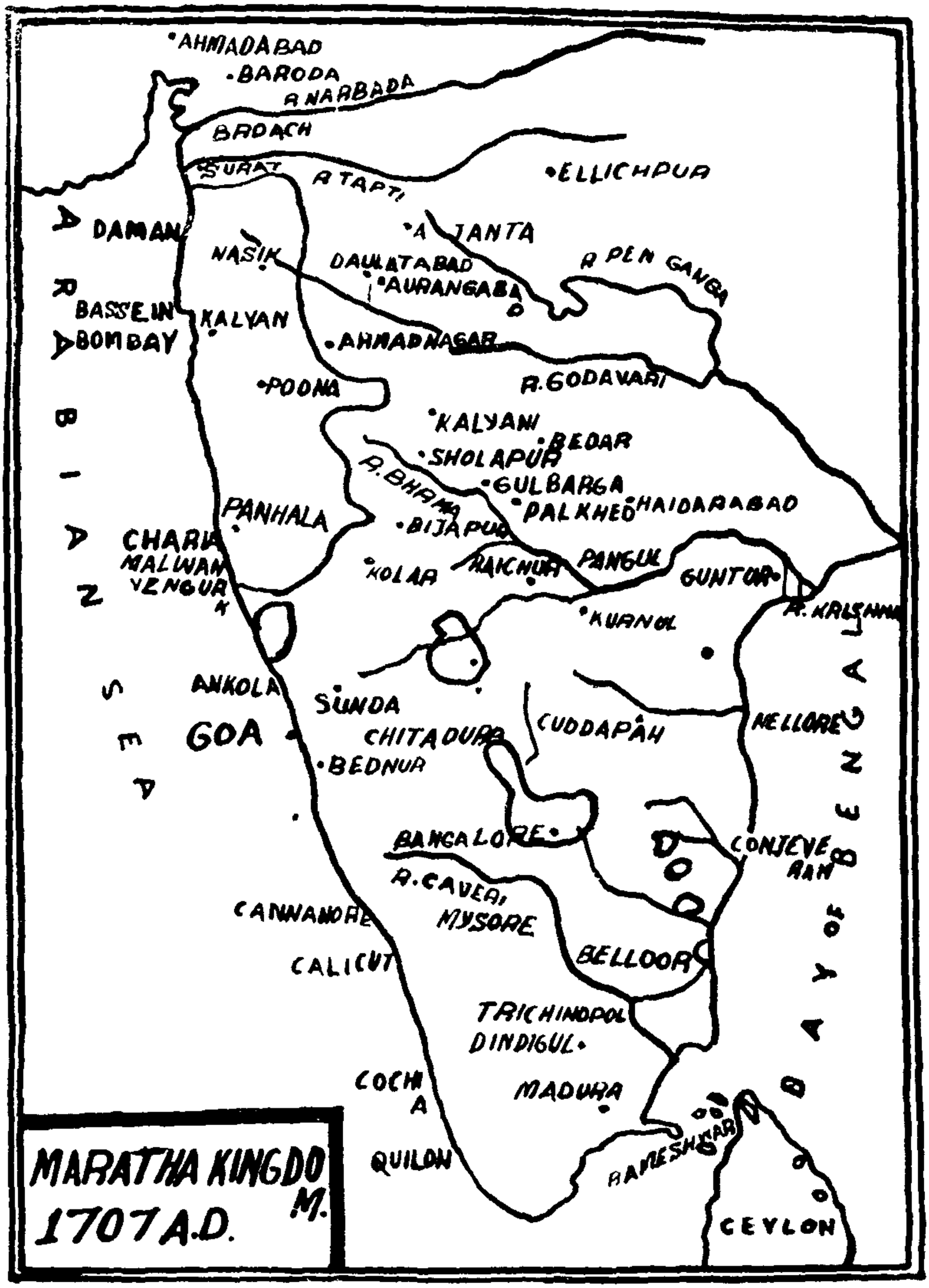
*Sardesai, *Main Currents of Maratha History*, 87-92.


AHMADABAD
BARODA
NARBADA
BROACH
SURAT
TAPTI
ELLICHPUR
DAMAN
JANTA
NASIK
DAULATABAD
AURANGABAD
PEN GANGA
BASSEIN
KALYAN
BOMBAY
AHMADNAGAR
GODAVARI
POONA
KALYANI
BEDAR
SHOLAPUR
BHAMA
GULBARGA
PALKHED
HAIDARABAD
PANHALA
BIJAPUR
CHARA
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VENGURA
KOLAR
RAICHUR
PANGLI
GUNTUR
KURNOL
KRISHNA
ANKOLA
SUNDA
GOA
CHITADURG
CUDDAPAH
NELLORE
BEDNUR
BANGALORE
CONJEVERAM
CAVERI
CANWANORE
MYSORE
CALICUT
BELLOOR
TRICHINOPOLI
DINDIGUL
COCHIN
MADURA
QUILON
RAMESHWAR
CEYLON
BAY OF BENGAL
ARABIAN SEA
MARATHA KINGDOM
1707 A.D.

at Satara. The Peshwa acted almost independently, and became "the de facto ruler of the Marathas."*

Balaji encouraged young men of dash and daring generally in their teens to direct their attention and energy to Berar, Malwa and Gujrat. Such lads knew a little reading, writing and arithmetic. As cheap ponies were available in the Deccan in large numbers, they could ride very well. Even Maratha women knew how to ride. "Writers, bankers, accountants, artisans, builders, painters, priests, bards, servants of all kinds came into requisition". Maratha colonies sprang up at important places in Central India. "The founders of the houses of Nagpur, of Akalkot, of Dhar, Indore, Ujjain, Baroda and other places were all young boys."†

Treaty with Husain Ali Khan, July 1718

Maratha settlements alone could not satisfy the ambition of the Peshwa. He was in search of higher prizes. An opportunity to interfere in the affairs of the Mughal Emperor at Delhi soon presented itself to him, and he took full advantage of it.

Husain Ali Khan, one of the famous Sayyid brothers, was appointed viceroy of the Deccan by Farrukh Siyar in 1715. The Emperor then turned against his elder brother, Sayyid Abdullah Khan, the Wazir of Delhi. Finding his own life in danger, Abdullah invited Husain Ali to Delhi. The Deccan viceroy did not wish to leave his provinces at the mercy of the Marathas. Besides he needed their help at Delhi against the Emperor. He, therefore, sought Maratha assistance.

This was a unique opportunity for Shahu to extend the Maratha influence to the imperial capital. In addition Shahu wanted to secure liberty of his own mother Yesubai, wife Savitribai, (the second wife, Ambikabai, having died), his brother, Madansinh, and several others who had been retained at Delhi as hostages for the past twelve years. A treaty of peace and amity was agreed to in July 1718 between Shahu and Husain Ali who assured the former of its ratification by the Emperor. The terms of the treaty were:

1. That Shivaji's original dominions acquired from Bijapur and the Mughals, called Swarajya‡, including certain forts beyond

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*Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, ii, 18.

†Sardesai, *Main Currents of Maratha History*, 103-4.

‡This territory was bounded by sea in the west, by river Tapti in the north and the Krishna in the south, while the eastern boundary was not well-defined.

it, should be restored to Shahu.

2. That the territories recently seized by the Marathas in Karnatak, Haidarabad, Gondwana, Berar and Khandesh should be formally assigned to Shahu.

3. That the Marathas should be granted the right to collect Chauth and Sardeshmukhi from the six imperial states of the Deccan.

4. That the Maratha hostages retained at Delhi should be set free.

5. The Marathas in return: (*a*) would guarantee preservation of peace and order, (*b*) would place a force of fifteen thousand soldiers at the disposal of the Emperor, and (*c*) would pay an annual tribute of ten lakhs of rupees.*

The Peshwa marches to Delhi, 1718

Farrukh Siyar did not approve of this transaction. The Marathas were anxious to get the terms confirmed. Husain Ali was eager to lead the Maratha contingent to Delhi. He offered the Peshwa to pay his troops at the rate of one rupee a day each, to meet his travelling expenses besides higher salaries to officers. In all the Peshwa received about fifty thousand rupees daily. Balaji Vishwanath was accompanied by his young son Bajirao and many generals and diplomats of note.

On the approach of the Maratha forces, the Emperor was frightened. He invited Nizam-ul-mulk from Moradabad, Ajit Singh from Gujrat and Sarbuland Khan from Patna. A scuffle took place in which a large number of men including 2,000 Marathas lost their lives. The Sayyids came out victorious. Farrukh Siyar was deposed and killed. After a very brief rule of two princes, Muhammad Shah was crowned as Emperor.

Ratification of the Treaty, March 1719

As the new Emperor had ascended the throne with the support of the Sayyids, he followed their advice as long as he considered it unavoidable. He ratified the treaty in March 1719. This treaty is considered as "one of the most noteworthy state documents in Indian history and constituted the Magna Charta of the Maratha

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**Grant Duff*, i, 378-9; *Sardesai*, ii, 39-41.

Dominion."* It ushered in a new era for Maratha expansion. To seek employment outside their homeland new leaders arose everywhere. They recruited their own troops and demanded Chauth from princes and government officials. The Marathas, "a poor and half-naked people"† were dazzled by the grandeur of the north. They began to imitate the north Indian courts in dress, food and manners. The "river of gold " began to flow from the north to the south. The Maratha state became a vassalage of the Mughal Empire.‡

Bajirao's Victory over Nizam-ul-mulk, February 1728

Balaji Vishwanath died on 2 April 1720, and was succeeded in the office of the Peshwa by his 19 year old son, Bajirao. He was a remarkable personality and possessed "both the head to plan and the hand to execute".§

As a result of Emperor Muhammad Shah's intrigue, Sayyid Husain Ali was murdered in October 1720. His brother Sayyid Abdullah was imprisoned in November 1720 and was put to death two years later. Nizam-ul-mulk was the viceroy of the Deccan. He was bitterly opposed to the Marathas. He checked them from collecting Chauth. In a battle fought in December 1720, the Nizam was worsted. Bajirao met him on 4 January 1721. The Nizam declined to act upon the terms of the treaty of 1719. He became Prime Minister in February 1722.

Finding the situation at the capital rather dismal owing to the Emperor's incapacity and intrigue, he acquired for himself the viceroyalty of the Deccan, Malwa and Gujrat. Being situated on the highroad from north to south, Malwa occupied a key position in the security of the Mughal Empire. This province was coveted

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*Sir Richard Temple, quoted by Sardesai, in *New History of the Marathas*, ii, 46.

†Sardesai, *New History of the Marathas*, ii, 48.

‡Beautiful girls from north India came in demand in the south. Peshwa Balajirao wrote on 11 June 1744, to his agent Damodarpant Hingane at Delhi: "I asked you at your departure for the north to acquire and send me two handsome Hindu girls aged about ten years. Please do not forget the mission and send the girls as quickly as possible." [Letter quoted by *Sardesai*, ii, 242.]

The Maratha historian further states: "There are many similar requests from the south to the north for girls being purchased, trained in music and dancing and sent to Poona and other places." [*Ibid*, 243.]

§*Grant Duff*, i, 410; *Sardesai*, ii, 66.

by the Marathas to serve as a base for their advance into northern India. The Rajput Raja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur was equally interested in the occupation of Malwa. Muhammad Shah also grew jealous of Nizam's rising power, and he transferred him to Avadh. Nizam-ul-mulk resigned his prime ministership in December 1723, came to the Deccan, and set himself up almost as an independent ruler at Haidarabad in 1724.

In 1725 and 1726 Bajirao subdued Karnatak. This was resented by the Nizam who considered it as an interference in his own sphere of action. He commenced plundering Poona district. The Peshwa attacked Burhanpur and Aurangabad, two important cities of the Nizam. As expected the Nizam left Poona and advanced towards Bajirao. He was intercepted by Maratha forces near Palkhed, 32 kilometres west of Aurangabad in February 1728, and was forced to capitulate on Peshwa's terms. Nizam-ul-mulk approved the treaty of 1719 and acknowledged Shahu as the head of the Marathas.*

Marathas capture Malwa, November 1728

Being free from the tangled politics of the south, the youthful Bajirao, on the advice of Malharrao Holkar and Ranoji Sindhia, turned to Malwa. Bajirao and his younger brother, Chimnaji, advanced from Poona, by two different routes. Chimnaji was accompanied by Ranoji Sindhia, Malharrao Holkar, Naro Shankar, Govindpant Ballal and Antaji Mankeshwar. This force was opposed by Giridhar Bahadur, the Mughal Governor of Malwa, assisted by his able cousin, Daya Bahadur . The battle was fought across the river Narbada near Dhar in November 1728, in which the Governor and his cousin were killed, and Malwa fell into the hands of the Marathas.†

Conquest of Budelkhand, March 1729

On hearing that Malwa had fallen, Bajirao marched straight into Bundelkhand. Its Governor was Muhammad Khan Bangash, the founder of the house of Farrukhabad. At this time he had besieged Raja Chhatrasal in the fort of Jaitpur. Bajirao hurried to support Chhatrasal and routed the Bangash chief in March 1729. Out of gratitude Chhatrasal ceded to the Marathas the districts of

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Sardesai, ii, 100.

†*Ibid*, 102.

Sagar, Kalpi, Sironj, Jhansi, Garhakota, Kunch, Hirdenagar and Hata. This territory was placed under the charge of Govindpant, who later came to be called Bundele on account of his having served in Bundelkhand for a long time.

Chhatrasal presented to Bajirao on this occasion a young accomplished dancing Muslim girl, Mastani. She possessed a bewitching charm and beauty and her music and dancing were enchanting. Her skill in horsemanship and the use of sword and spear was remarkable. "She always accompanied Bajirao in his campaigns and rode stirrup to stirrup with him". She led the Hindu way of life and served Bajirao as a devoted wife. She bore him a son named Shamsher Bahadur, who was the founder of the house of the Nawabs of Banda.*

Gujrat laid under Contribution, 1730

It was in the beginning of 1730 when Chimnaji marched into Gujrat at the head of a strong force. Sarbuland Khan, the Mughal Governor of the province, agreed to pay Chauth and Sardeshmukhi.†

Ahmadabad was occupied by Raghunathrao and Damaji Gaikwar in April 1753. They extended their sway to Kathiawar up to the sea, but the harbours of Broach, Surat and Cambay remained outside their jurisdiction.‡

Imperial Wazir and Mir Bakhshi repulsed 1735

Emperor Muhammad Shah was feeling restless for having lost the province of Malwa to the Marathas. He despatched two armies by different routes. One force numbering 25,000 was led by Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan along the main direct road in November 1734. He was opposed by Pilaji Jadav. In a number of actions the Wazir was worsted. The Mir Bakhshi Khan-e-Dauran went through Rajasthan. Ranoji Sindhia and Malharrao Holkar surrounded him at Bundi. He was forced to agree to pay to the Marathas twenty-two lakhs of rupees as the Chauth of Malwa on behalf of Emperor Muhammad Shah.§

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*Sardesai, ii, 105-8.
†Ibid, ii, 123.
‡Ibid, 312.
§SPD, xiv, 21, 22, 23, 29.

Bajirao's sudden spring before Delhi, 1737

Bajirao wanted to secure the formal ratification of the agreement made by Khan-e-Dauran regarding the tribute from Malwa. Early in 1736 he was in Rajasthan, and wished to go to Delhi to meet the Emperor who declined to see him, but showed willingness to settle terms through his agents.* Peshwa decided to return to Poona to make preparations. He left Ranoji Sindhia and Malharrao Holkar in Malwa where they developed their permanent seats at Gwalior and Indore respectively. Bajirao started for northern India in December 1736. On the way "Bhadawar and Ater were captured and an enormous amount of booty was obtained".†

The Maratha advance-guard under Malharrao Holkar and Baji Bhivrao crossed the Jamuna "for ravaging the fertile imperial territories of the Doab".‡ Sa'adat Khan opposed them and inflicted considerable losses upon them. Sa'adat Khan was then joined by Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan, Mir Bakhshi Khan-e-Dauran and Muhammad Khan Bangash of Farrukhabad. They lay encamped near Mathura. Bajirao cut into the rear of this army, and made a sudden spring before Delhi on 28 March 1737. Having plundered a few places in the suburbs of the capital he fell back to Jhil (Talkatora). On 30 March a Mughal force of about 8,000 strong advanced to attack the Marathas, but it was routed by Sindhia, Holkar and Pawar. Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan engaged the Marathas in a skirmish, and after dark both parties retired to their own camps. On 31 March the Marathas marched towards Rewari, Kot Putli and Gwalior. Bajirao wrote on 5 April 1737 thus: "We have practically desolated the environs of Delhi."§

Nizam-ul-mulk defeated, January 1738

Muhammad Shah felt terrified at the presence of the Marathas at Delhi. He realized that Nizam-ul-mulk was the only person in his empire who could help him against the Marathas. He summoned him to Delhi, conferred upon him the highest title of Asaf Jah, and ordered him to expel the Marathas from Malwa and Bundelkhand. This information leaked out to Bajirao. When the

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*"Khan Dauran the Mir Bakhshi sent five to ten thousand rupees every-day" to Bajirao for his personal expenses. [*Sardesai*, ii, 151.]

†*Ibid*, 152.

‡*Ibid*.

§*Ibid*, 154.

PESHWA BALAJIRAO

Courtesy Phoenix Publications Bombay

Nizam reached Bhopal, Bajirao besieged him, and cut off all the supplies. The Nizam was forced to sign a treaty at Doraha Sarai on 7 January 1738. Nizam-ul-mulk agreed to make a formal surrender of Malwa to the Marathas under the Emperor's seal, to cede them all the territory lying between the river Narbada and the Jamuna, and to pay a sum of fifty lakhs by way of compensation.*

Spheres of influence demarcated, 1739

The Maratha power was expanding rapidly, and various chiefs had grown powerful. They would no longer tolerate Peshwa's interference in their internal affairs. The Peshwas were Brahmans, while most of the generals belonged to the Maratha peasantry stock. A number of battles were fought to decide this issue. Eventually the Peshwa like a true and farsighted statesman yielded. In 1739 he demarcated different spheres of influence. Each could work independently in his own region. This demarcation avoided conflict between the Peshwa and other chiefs as well as between the chiefs themselves. Gujrat was assigned to the Dhabade, Berar to Bhosle, Dhar to the Pawar family, while Malwa and Bundelkhand were retained by the Peshwa for himself.†

Bajirao's death, April 1740

Bajirao's infatuation for Mastani, a Muslim girl of low position, had aroused a storm of indignation and resentment in Maharashtra. Towards the close of 1739 in Bajirao's absence from Poona, Mastani was imprisoned by the members of the Peshwa's family with a view to murder her. This news deeply shocked the Peshwa. Finding himself incapable to rescue her and being unable to bear separation from her, he fell into despair and despondency. He took to heavy drinking, and suddenly died on 28 April 1740 at the young age of forty. Such was the intensity of love between the couple that on hearing this tragic news, Mastani also collapsed and expired.‡

Malwa formally ceded by the Emperor, July 1741

Bajirao was succeeded as Peshwa by his son, Balajirao, aged 18. The new Peshwa was mainly a good civil administrator and a diplomat. He had no liking for the profession of arms and had "never accompanied his father in his campaigns." He also¶

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*Sardesai, ii, 158-9.
†Sarkar, i, 39.
‡Sardesai, ii, 181-2.
¶Sardesai, ii, 190.

possessed a conciliatory disposition.* For military campaigns he depended upon his uncle Chimnaji who died in January 1741. His ten year old son Sadashivrao Bhau was greatly patronized by him, and when he grew up to be a man, he was entrusted with military duties.

Balajirao submitted petitions to Emperor Muhammad Shah requesting for fulfilment of the various promises made by him to the late Peshwa. By constant exertions and with the active assistance of Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur the Peshwa succeeded in his aim in respect of Malwa. Emperor Muhammad Shah retained the nominal possession of Malwa in his own hands by appointing his son Prince Ahmad as Governor of Malwa and nominating Peshwa Balajirao as his Deputy on 4 July 1741. After a few clarifications made on 7 September 1741, he entrusted "the whole management of the Subah of Malwa to the Peshwa including the civil and criminal jurisdiction."†

Annexation of Orissa and imposition of Chauth on Bihar and Bengal

The province of Bengal was considered the richest part of the empire. It consisted of three units, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa with Murshidabad as the seat of government. This province was seized by Alivardi Khan, a Turk, in 1740. His usurpation was resented by some of the old courtiers, particularly by Mir Habib, who sought intervention of Raghuji Bhosle of Nagpur. In 1742 Raghuji despatched his trusted lieutenant, Bhaskar Ram, with 10,000 soldiers. He captured Orissa where he was joined by Mir Habib. A contingent of 700 Maratha horsemen under guidance of the Mir suddenly attacked Murshidabad, and secured a booty "amounting to between two and three crores of rupees."‡

The Marathas extended their authority close to Calcutta. The British merchants dug a deep and long trench which came to be known as the Maratha Ditch. Alivardi Khan tried his level best to drive out the Marathas who continued their annual raids intermittingly for nine years. Peace was eventually made in March 1751 by the cession of Orissa and the payment of 12 lakhs of rupees as Chauth for Bihar and Bengal.§

**Grant Duff*, i, 492.
†*Sardesai*, ii, 202.
‡*Ibid*, ii, 211.
§*Siyar*, ii, 116-7; *CPC*, ii, 1245-7; *Grant Duff*, i, 493-9.

CHAPTER III

MARATHA PREDOMINANCE AT DELHI

Safdar Jang invites Maratha assistance, 1749

The years from the death of Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan and Emperor Muhammad Shah in 1748 to the battle of Panipat in 1761 with short intervals form the first period of Maratha ascendancy at Delhi Court. Safdar Jang assumed office of prime minister in June 1748. The Turani party which had been in power for the past thirty years and was now headed by Intizam-ud-daulah, son of the late Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan, began to oppose Safdar Jang who was the head of the Irani party. In November 1748 a serious attempt was made on his life when a large number of light pieces of artillery and rockets were discharged upon him.*

Early in 1749 Emperor Ahmad Shah tried to strike him another blow. He invited Nizam-ul-mulk's son Nasir Jang from the Deccan to oust Safdar Jang from office. Nasir Jang wrote a letter to his elder brother Ghazi-ud-din at Delhi stating the real object of his visit. In another letter addressed to Safdar Jang he humbly sought his assistance in driving out the Marathas from northern India. Safdar Jang showed the original letter to Hingane, the Peshwa's envoy at the capital. Hingane informed him what Nasir Jang had written to his brother, and warned him of the conspiracy of the Turani party.

The Wazir made an earnest appeal for help to Peshwa Balajirao through Hingane. The Peshwa instructed Jayappa Sindhia and Malharrao Holkar to bar the path of Nasir Jang. At this stage peace was made between Safdar Jang and the Emperor who ordered Nasir Jang to return immediately to Haidarabad from the place where he received the letter. As a token of thanks for the Peshwa's assistance Safdar Jang prevailed upon the Emperor to grant Balajirao a *khilat* of six pieces, a jewelled *jigha*, a sword, an elephant

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Bayan, 248; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 17b.

and a horse, while suitable presents were sent for Jayappa Sindhia and Malharrao Holkar.*

Safdar Jang employs Marathas against Rohillas, 1751

Safdar Jang's position was not yet very secure. The Emperor was dominated by his mother and her paramour Javid Khan, both of whom seized all power. When Safdar Jang tried to assert himself, they became hostile to him. Taking advantage of this situation the Rohillas and the Bangash Afghans began to commit aggression in Safdar Jang's provinces of Avadh and Allahabad. Ahmad Khan Bangash killed Safdar Jang's deputy Navalrai and plundered his camp in August 1750. One month later the Afghans defeated Safdar Jang who was severely wounded. They seized Ghazipur and Jaunpur, and sacked Lucknow and Allahabad. In March 1751 Safdar Jang obtained Maratha help. The Emperor sent certain presents for Balajirao on 9 March 1751. A Maratha force of 20,000 under Malharrao Holkar and Jayappa Sindhia for Rs. 25,000 a day joined Safdar Jang. A Jat contingent was also hired for Rs. 15,000 daily.

The Maratha force entered the Doab and defeated Shahdil Khan Bangash at Qadirganj near Etawah on 20 March 1751. Thereupon Ahmad Khan Bangash hurried from Allahabad to defend his capital Farrukhabad. He summoned the Rohillas for assistance. Before they could join him, he was repulsed on the banks of the Ganga. The Marathas and Jats then rushed towards the advancing Rohilla army under Sadullah Khan and Bahadur Khan. The Rohillas were defeated on 28 April 1751. They sustained heavy losses as Bahadur Khan with ten thousand troops lay dead on the battle-field. Sadullah Khan took to flight, and his camp was plundered. Ahmad Khan Bangash fled away in the night leaving behind a large part of his baggage. Dattaji Sindhia came into prominence for the first time on this occasion.†

Safdar Jang makes a subsidiary defensive alliance with Marathas, April 1752

Safdar Jang remained busy in warfare with the Rohillas and Bangash Afghans for a long time. Meanwhile Ahmad Shah Durrani

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*_SPD_, ii, 12e, 13; _Bayan_, 248; _Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi_, 18b, 35b; _Delhi Chronicle_, dated 31 July 1749.

†_Sardesai_, ii, 362; _Sarkar_, i, 225-8.

invaded the Panjab in the cold weather of 1751-2. He captured Lahore in March 1752. This news created a thrill of horror in Delhi. Emperor Ahmad Shah pressed Safdar Jang then in Lucknow to secure Maratha assistance immediately by offering any terms acceptable to them, and issued urgent summons calling him to Delhi. On the receipt of this letter Safdar Jang hurried to Kanauj where the Marathas lay encamped. On 12 April 1752 he entered into a subsidiary defensive alliance as Prime Minister of the Mughal Empire and on behalf of the Emperor with Jayappa Sindhia and Malharrao Holkar who signed the pact on behalf of the Peshwa. The following were the terms of the agreement:

1. The Peshwa should keep Ahmad Shah Durrani out of India for which the Emperor would pay him thirty lakhs of rupees.

2. The Peshwa should defend the Empire against internal danger such as from Rajputs, Rohillas, the Bangash Afghans, Jats and others, and in return he would receive another twenty lakhs.

3. To meet the military expenditure the Peshwa would be granted Chauth on the revenues of Sind, Panjab, and certain districts in the upper Ganga Doab.

4. The Peshwa would be appointed Governor of Agra, Mathura, Narnaul and Ajmer, and he should not disturb the existing system of administration.

5. The Peshwa's generals should wait upon the Emperor like other nobles and should join the imperial forces while going on a campaign.*

Marathas withdraw from Delhi, May 1752

Having made this pact, Safdar Jang with his Maratha allies reached Delhi.† To his dismay he found that the Emperor had formally ceded the Panjab to Ahmad Shah Durrani, and that his agent Qalandar Khan had been given the royal rescript to this effect on 23 April 1752.

Finding no more necessity for Maratha help, the Emperor declined to confirm the contract settled by Safdar Jang. The

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**Rajwade*, i, 1; *Kotah Daftar*, i, 86; *Sarkar*, i, 202-3; (new ed.); *Sardesai*, ii, 365-6.

†*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 28 April 1752 recorded: "Malhar Holkar after crossing the Jamuna had encamped near village Barari."

"Malhar Holkar encamped close to Talkatora." [*Ibid*, dated 16 May 1752).

Maratha leaders demanded 50 lakhs as the price of their immediate withdrawal and began plundering the people. The Delhi Court naturally felt worried at it.

At this time a war was going on in the south between the Peshwa and Nizam-ul-mulk's son, Salabat Jang. The Peshwa invited Ghazi-ud-din, the eldest son of Nizam-ul-mulk who was in Delhi, to come to the south and claim Haidarabad. The Peshwa directed Sindhia and Holkar to escort him to the Deccan. The Maratha leaders at Delhi offered to retire if the Emperor would confer the viceroyalty of the Deccan on Ghazi-ud-din by dismissing Salabat Jang. They agreed to pay to the Emperor a tribute of thirty lakhs in lieu of this rescript. This amount was to be considered as having been paid out of fifty lakhs demanded by them. The Emperor in order to get rid of the Marat has accepted the terms. Ghazi-ud-din and the Marathas left Delhi on 14 May 1752. They reached Aurangabad towards the close of September 1752. The Peshwa joined them in the beginning of October 1752. Ghazi-ud-din was invited to dinner by the mother of Nizam Ali, another son of Nizam-ul-mulk, and was poisoned to death on 16 October 1752. Thus the Maratha plan to have a friendly ruler installed in the viceroyalty of the Deccan at Haidarabad fell through.*

Marathas join Emperor against Safdar Jang, 1753

On the departure of the main Maratha army from the north, only two Maratha chiefs remained in Delhi. Antaji Mankeshwar commanded a small Maratha contingent, while Hingane brothers were the Peshwa's diplomatic agents. The hostility between Emperor Ahmad Shah and his Wazir Safdar Jang continued unabated. Both the parties sought Maratha support. The Emperor was joined by Intizam-ud-daulah and Imad-ul-mulk, a 16 year old son of late Ghazi-ud-din. This young lad was an arch-intriguer, and in his heart of hearts was enemy of all those who were in power, though outwardly he appeared to be a great friend of his supporters. In order to wean away the Marathas from the side of Safdar Jang, he prevailed upon the Emperor to throw the greedy Marathas such a bait as it could not be declined. In consequence the Emperor through Hingane offered the Peshwa one kror of rupees and the cession of Safdar Jang's provinces of Avadh and Allahabad. On

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**Sardesai*, ii, 324; *Sarkar*, i, 206; *Grant Duff*, i, 539.

17 January 1753 Antaji Mankeshwar, the rival of Hinganes, was created a four—*hazari* with standard and kettledrums by Shuja-ud-daulah son of Safdar Jang, but he also went over to the side of the Emperor on 19 April 1753*.

The Peshwa accepted the tempting offer and deserted his old ally Safdar Jang. "The Marathas were", says Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "mere mercenaries, ever ready to transfer their venal swords to the highest bidder."† In September 1753 the Peshwa sent a huge army under the command of his 18-year old brother Raghunathrao who was instructed to procure as much money as he could, but not less than 50 lakhs. He was accompanied by leading Maratha nobles such as Jayappa Sindhia, Malharrao Holkar, Shamsher Bahadur, Sakharam Bapu, Ramchandra Ganesh, Naro Shankar, Babuji Naik, Vithal Shivdeo, Govindpant Bundele and Trimbakrao.

Meanwhile the struggle was going on between Safdar Jang and Emperor Ahmad Shah. The Emperor won over Najib Khan Rohilla, while the Wazir was joined by Surajmal Jat with 15,000 horse. The civil war which engulfed the capital and its neighbour-hood up to a distance of about 30 kilometres lasted for over six months. Safdar Jang was defeated in a number of engagements, and before the arrival of main Maratha army he retired to Lucknow, thus ending the civil war. He died there a broken-hearted man in October 1754, and was succeeded by his son Shuja-ud-daulah. Now Intizam-ud-daulah had become Wazir of the Empire and Imad-ul-mulk the Mir Bakhshi‡.

Marathas march towards Delhi

The grand Maratha army crossed the river Narbada in the beginning of October 1753. There they came to know that peace had been made between the Emperor and his Wazir. "The war for which they were so urgently invited had been closed, and now the presence of the large Maratha armies in the north was considered quite a nuisance as they had to exact their subsistence from the inoffensive and hapless populace§."

The Marathas continued their advance and entered Rajasthan towards the close of October 1753. Passing through

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**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 17 January and 19 April 1753; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 50 b.

†*Sarkar*, i, 255.

‡*Sarkar*, i, 265, 283; *Sardesai*, ii, 367-9.

§*Sardesai*, ii, 376.

Kotah, Bundi and other places they arrived at Jaipur where they stayed for over two months from 9 November 1753 to 15 January 1754. Then they entered the Jat country, and at the instigation of Imad-ul-mulk laid siege to Surajmal's famous fort of Kumbher.

But an advance-guard of the Marathas under Khanderao marched to the capital. Delhi Chronicle, dated 24 November 1753 recorded that "Khandoji son of Malhar Holkar came to Shah-jahanabad." He interviewed the Emperor on 22 December and received presents.*

Emperor is terrified of Marathas, May 1754

The new Wazir and Mir Bakhshi were bitterly opposed to each other. The Emperor depended upon Intizam-ud-daulah for guidance. The Wazir formed a curious plan to crush Imad-ul-mulk, the Mir Bakhshi. It was to rally round the Emperor the united forces and resources of Safdar Jang, Surajmal and Rajput princes. This grand coalition was to be built after a personal discussion between the persons concerned and the Emperor. Delhi, being in the grip of Imad, was not considered a suitable place for such parleys. The Wazir proposed to fix the rendezvous at Sikandarabad 50 kilometres south of the capital. Towards the end of April 1754, the Emperor left for this place accompanied by his womenfolk numbering about 350, treasures and heavy artillery.†

The Emperor and Wazir reached Sikandarabad on 17 May 1754. Imad-ul-mulk who had joined Marathas at Kumbher supplied the information about the Emperor to his allies. The Marathas concluded peace with Surajmal on 18 May 1754. Their advance-guard under Malharrao Holkar and Imad arrived at Mathura. This news sent a thrill of horror in the imperial camp. In Friday prayers on 24 May the Emperor wept and cried before God for deliverance from the impending peril.‡

Imperial Camp plundered and Ladies outraged, 26 May 1754

At midnight between 25 and 26 May 1754, Emperor was informed that a Maratha force of 20,000 horsemen under Malharrao

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Delhi Chronicle, dated 22 December 1753.

†*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 96b; *Siyar*, iii, 49.

‡*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 125b—128b; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 89-90; *Siyar*, iii, 49.

Holkar was on its way to Sikandarabad. This news unnerved every one in the camp. The Emperor immediately took his mother Udhambai, his favourite wife Inayatpuribai, his young son Mahmud Shah, and his half-sister Sahiba Begam together with the jewellery of these ladies, and rushed out of the camp at 2 a.m. in covered bullock carriages (*rath*). It being the fourth day of the new moon, there was pitch dark. The visibility being very low none knew what was happening to others. The Emperor reached Shorajpur, 12 kilometres away on the road to Delhi. At this place the Emperor changed over to fast-running female elephants and arrived at Delhi at 2 p.m. on 26 May. Wazir Intizam-ud-daulah and head of the artillery, Samsam, joined him at 5 p.m. The Emperor enquired about the whereabouts of the royal ladies left behind, and both the chiefs professed complete ignorance.

On the departure of the Emperor from Sikandarabad the entire camp was in a tumult. Every body was on the roadside. Malika-e-zamani and Sahiba Mahal, the widow-queens of Muhammad Shah had just got into their *raths*, when the Marathas arrived upon the scene. At the firing of the Marathas all the menfolk fled away leaving shrieking women to their fate. The darkness of the night was such as it could be cut through with a knife . No torch-bearer was to be seen anywhere. The carriages of all the women including queens and princesses were captured by Maratha soldiers. They tore off the curtains of the carriages, threw away their veils, removed their jewellery and outraged their modesty. Women were kept as captives in the Maratha camp. Not a piece of cloth was left with them to bathe and change in the hottest part of the year. Such was the most shameful conduct of the Marathas. Even the death of the only son of Malharrao two months earlier had not mellowed his heart.

A vast quantity of spoil fell into the hands of Maratha troopers. It included state property as well as individual belongings. There was plenty of gold, silver, jewellery, ornaments, clothes, tents, elephants, horses, bullocks and 500 pieces of cannon, both big and small. But the Marathas could not retain all the loot. In the early hours of the morning thousands of Jats and Gujars from the neighbourhood fell upon the camp, and they even plundered the Marathas.

Later in the day Malika-e-zamani who was also a capitive in the Maratha camp summoned Malharrao to her presence, and

rebuked him. "He slapped his own face in the Queen's presence and tried to plead his innocence saying that it was the work of the plundering Pindaris attached to the army. Malharrao caught hold of a few culprits and cut off their heads in her presence. He then collected all the ladies and their goods together and sent them two lacs for their expenses."*

Even Imad-ul-mulk, the callous—hearted master—intriguer, felt ashamed of these happenings. He waited upon Malika-e-zamani, offered her five gold coins as a *nazar*, placed his turban at her feet, and expressed his sorrow and grief, saying: "I was helpless in the matter. The Deccanis would listen to none. I am like their servant. My face has been blackened†." The grand old lady blamed fate‡.

Marathas help Imad in his nefarious activities, June 1754

After plundering the royal camp at Sikandarabad on 26 May 1754, Malharrao and Imad-ul-mulk reached Delhi. Raghunathrao broke up his camp at Mathura on 26 May 1754, and arrived in the suburbs of Delhi on 1 June 1754. Malharrao was already exerting pressure on Emperor Ahmad Shah to dismiss Intizam-ud-daulah and appoint Imad in his place. Raghunath's presence in Delhi cowed him into submission. On 1 June the Emperor dismissed Intizam-ud-daulah and appointed Imad-ud-mulk prime minister. On 2 June Imad deposed Ahmad Shah and declared Alamgir II as Emperor . Ahmad Shah was captured by Saifullah Khan and imprisoned in a room. A shawl was thrown over his mother's head, she was bodily lifted and carried to the same room where Ahmad was. This being a very hot day, Ahmad Shah asked for water. Saifullah Khan gave him some water in a broken piece of an earthen jar.§ Ahmad Shah was blinded and he and his mother were both murdered.

The new Emperor showed his gratitude to the Marathas by issuing a royal rescript on 25 October 1754. By it he surrendered

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**Sardesai*, ii, 379.

†*Sarkar*, i, 302.

‡*Bayan*, 283-4; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 128b-131a; *Shakir*, 77; *Siyar*, iii, 49; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 90-2; *SPD*, xxi, 60; xxvii, 90.

§"*Dar yak lakht-e-shikastah āwand-e-gili.*"

[*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 405.]

Kurukshetra and Gaya, the two holy places of the Hindus, to the Peshwa. The Muslim officers at these places were withdrawn, and the two cities were placed under Hingane brothers. He also wished to favour the Marathas with the same duties at Kashi and Prayag; but these places being under the jurisdiction of the Nawab of Avadh he was helpless.

Raghunathrao demanded one kror of rupees from Wazir Imad-ul-mulk as the price for Maratha assistance in the late revolutionary transactions. The Wazir had nothing to offer. Fighting broke out between the Marathas and the Wazir on 14 November 1754, and continued for about a month. The Marathas slaughtered people in the city. On 9 December they plundered the bazars on the river bank as well as the Brahmans at the Jamuna Ghat. Imad eventually agreed to pay 82½ lakhs. Only one-third of this amount could be collected with the utmost difficulty. For the balance certain districts in the Ganga Doab were assigned to the Marathas. Malharrao and other Maratha sardars were given *khilats* of conge on 21 December 1754.*

Raghunath's wanderings in the North, 1754—5

The huge Maratha forces following their usual practice lived on tributes and failing that on plunder. Raghunath stayed in Delhi for about six months, but he failed to obtain sufficient money from the Emperor and his Wazir. The supply of every thing of use in the capital and its neighbourhood had been completely exhausted. In December 1754 he felt compelled to cross the Jamuna and spend two weeks, 30 December 1754 to 13 January 1755 in bathing at Garhmukteshwar. This was the country of Najib-ud-daulah, and here also he could find no money. In February 1755 he crossed the Jamuna, entered Rajasthan, and reached Pushkar early in March 1755. Jayappa Sindhia was then fighting against Bijay Singh of Jodhpur. Raghunathrao wished to join him, but Jayappa did not like to be disturbed in his own arrangements. Raghunath thereupon retird to Gwalior, and returned to Poona in August 1755 after his wanderings in the north for two years†.

**Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 404-5; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 5b—6b, 12a; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 14, 19 November, 9 and 21 December 1754; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 99; *SPD*, xxvii, 89, 90; *Rajwade*, vi, 328; *Sardesai*, ii, 379.

†*Sardesai*, ii, 381-2.

The internal conflict of the Marathas in the North, 1755

On the retirement of Raghunathrao from northern India in August 1755, the mutual relations of the leading Maratha chiefs in the north are thus remarkably summed up by G. S. Sardesai:— "The worst legacy that Raghunathrao left behind was the open hostility that he allowed to prevail between Antaji Mankeshwar, the Maratha commandant at Delhi and the Hingane brothers, the diplomatic representatives of the Peshwa at the Imperial court. He could not reconcile these two chiefs any more than he could the other two, Sindia and Holkar. The origin of such disputes was in the greed of money. Whenever Maratha help was called for, it was the resident ambassador of the Marathas that was first approached, and he in his turn consulted the resident commandant. Hingane was the ambassador and Antaji the commander and each of them tried to utilise the occasion to improve his own monetary prospects. Hinganes also conducted a lucrative banking business, having branches in several outside places. Antaji's corruption and falsification of accounts became so notorious that the Peshwa issued orders to Sindia in 1759 to have him arrested and sent to Poona for trial . He arrived at Poona just at the time that Bhau Saheb was starting for the Panipat campaign; and the latter had no leisure at the moment to examine the charges against Antaji. He was taken to the north along with the large Maratha armies and dearly paid by his death at Panipat for all his sins".*

**New History of the Marathas*, ii, 382.

CHAPTER IV

FINANCIAL GRIP ON RAJASTHAN

Marathas Proud of Rajputs

Rajputs were the first people of India to strive and sacrifice in the service of the nation and religion. They continued the struggle for over seven hundred years, and set the noblest standards of chivalry and morality which have not so far been surpassed by any other people or country. It was for this reason that every one in India who had some pretensions to valour and heroism laid claim to Rajput origin.

In this connection R.V. Oturkar makes very interesting observations in his article on "*Rajput—Maratha Cultural Relationship*":—

"The Marathas were always very anxious to trace their descent from the Rajputs. *Ghorpade Bhakhar* is at pains to delineate a line of succession from Sujan Singh of Chitor to Shivaji. The *Chitnis Bakhar* also, in narrating the life of Shivaji traces his descent from Sujan Singh, the descendant of Laxman Singh of Padmini fame. The *Sabhasad Bakhar* which is a work of the closing years of the seventeenth century refers to the Rajput origin of the Marathas. For instance, Jaysingh sends a word to Shivaji, 'you are a Sisodia Rajput. You and I are related to each other'.....Shahaji, the father of Shivaji, in one of the letters written to a Bijapur Sardar, affirrms that he was a Rajput.....To quote his words: 'We are Rajputs, we shall serve only on conditions honourable to us'.* When the coronation ceremony of Shivaji was contemplated, information was obtained from Jaipur about the coronation ceremony."†

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*"आमा अकातुकाखे बोले करू नु गैरहिसाबी पादशाही खिजमत न केलो पेशजोदि न करू !"

†*Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 1951, pp. 190-1.

Rajput character in the eighteenth century

The Rajput princes had played a distinguished role in the Mughal service for about two hundred years. They were not only renowned generals, but displayed their skill in the field of diplomacy and administration. The Great Mughals had kept them under strict control. They were not allowed to indulge in their mutual warfare. Aurangzeb avoided them on religious grounds. Career outside their homeland ceased to exist. They were thrown back on their barren lands. Having no fear of the central authority under later Mughals, and having nothing to do at home, their centuries-old hidden, clannish rivalry and jealousy suddenly arose and swept the whole of Rajasthan.

Another important development had deeply affected the Rajput life . By this time the Rajput method of fighting with sword and spear had lost its value. Long-range and quickly-firing guns had come into vogue. Warfare had become an extremely expensive affair. Huge quantities of muskets and munitions were required. Training of recruits and providing food and clothing during long sieges cost enormously. The resources of Rajasthan were limited and meagre to sustain the new war system. Consequently the Rajput hunger for land, and thirst for outside allies knew no bounds.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar aptly sums up the position of Rajputs at this time: "There was no crime which a Rajput would not commit for the sake of land. Father killed son and son murdered father. Women of the noblest rank gave poison to their trusting kinsmen. Kings took the lives of loyal ministers. None, not even the highest born descendant of the god Rama, shrank from buying the aid of an alien plunderer to decide his domestic contests."*

Main centres of contest

The main centres of contest in Rajasthan were Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bundi and Udaipur. At the first three places dispute lay between two claimants to the throne. Every candidate was supported by his friends of the neighbourhood. On occasions all the three quarrels merged into one. The Maharana of Udaipur had to join the struggle sometimes at Bundi and at others at Jaipur. Assistance was often sought from outside mainly from Marathas. Occasionally different Maratha chiefs joined the rival parties. The issues were

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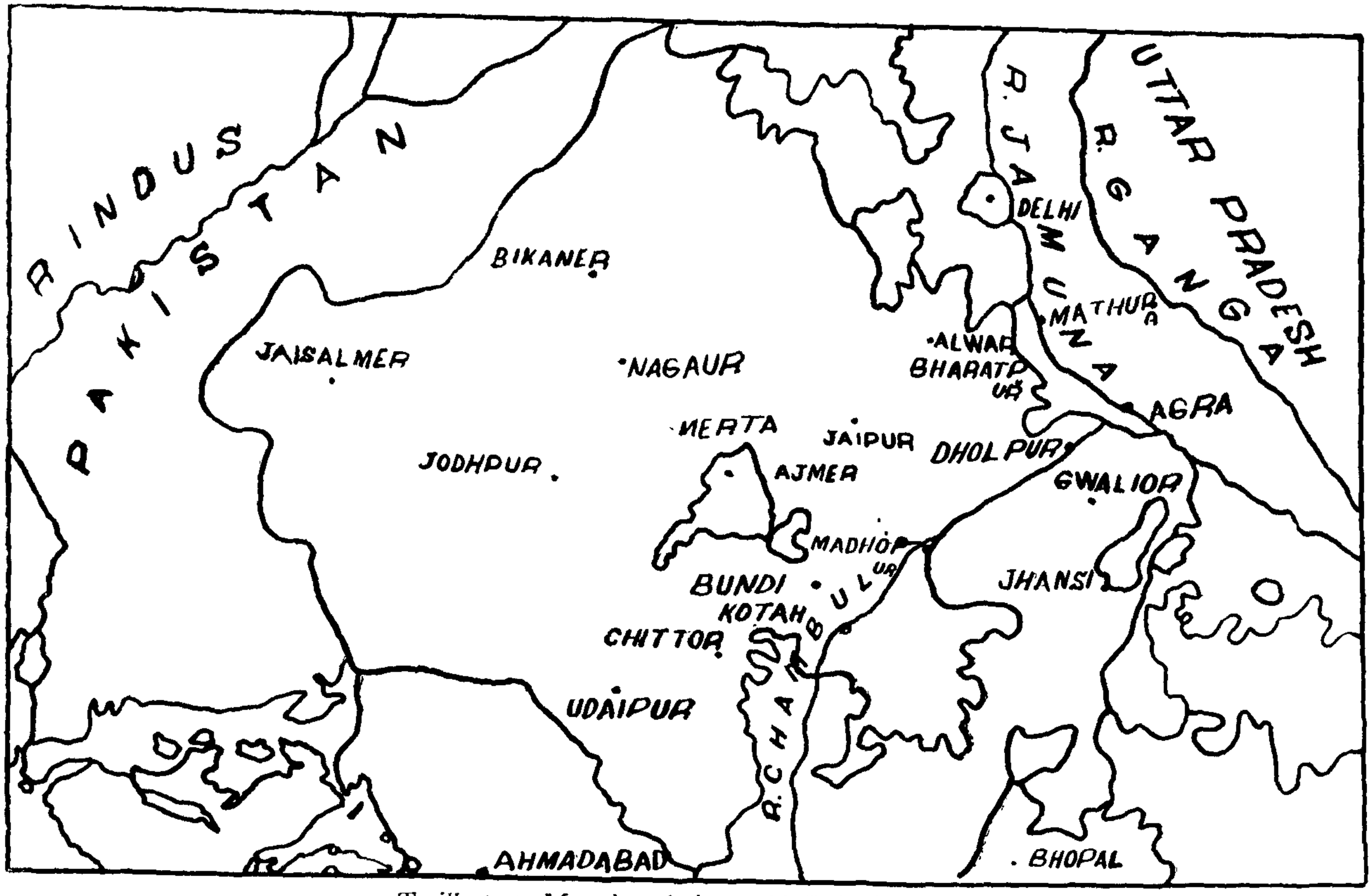
**Sarkar*, i, 131.



To illustrate Maratha relations with Rajasthan

decided after a prolonged conflict. Eventually the victor was as much ruined as the vanquished . The Marathas who first came as hired confederates reigned supreme as masters in the end.

BUNDI

Armed Maratha assistance invited

The Hada family of Rajasthan was divided into two branches, the senior being at Bundi and the junior at Kotah. A fierce rivalry sprang up between these two houses for the leadership of the Hada clan. This quarrel was later merged into a more serious challenge thrown by Sawai Jai Singh Kachhwa of Jaipur.

Jai Singh seized the fort of Bundi in 1729 in the absence of its rightful chief Budh Singh. As he wielded great personal influence with Emperor Muhammad Shah, he secured royal approval of the usurpation of Bundi in the name of Dalel Singh. This prince had agreed to remain subordinate to Jaipur. Jai Singh later on married his daughter to him. Budh Singh tried in vain to recover his lost dominion, and eventually turned insane. The roving Maratha bands took advantage of this situation. In December 1733 Pilaji Jadav entered the territory of Kotah and Bundi, and raised forcible contributions for about a month. He returned through Orchha and Datia which had previously been brought under Maratha sway.

It struck Budh Singh's *rani* to secure Maratha assistance, and she offered six lakhs of rupees for it. In response to her request in April 1734 Ranoji Sindhia and Malharrao Holkar assaulted Bundi. It was then under the control of Salim Singh father of Dalel Singh. The fort fell and Salim Singh was captured. Budh Singh's *rani* publicly declared Malharrao as her brother and tied a *rakhi* to his wrist with her own hands. No sooner had Marathas departed than Jai Singh conquered Bundi and restored it to Dalel Singh.

Budh Singh died in 1739. His son Ummed Singh, a high-spirited, dashing young lad of 15, carried on the struggle to gain his patrimony. He obtained assistance from Marathas and a number of Rajput princes. He laid siege to Bundi in July 1744. Dalel Singh was driven away, and Bundi was taken possession of by Ummed Singh. The new chief had promised to pay the Maratha a sum of ten lakhs of rupees. He paid two lakhs in 1749, and another three lakhs in 1754. He paid nothing more. He did not openly break off with the Marathas, but took full advantage of

their complications in the north and in Marwar. In July 1758 Jankoji Sindhia got a promise from Ummed Singh for payment of 4 lakhs of rupees*.

KOTAH

Realization of fine and succession duty

The other Hada house of Kotah invited Maratha wrath by its own folly. Nizam-ul-mulk tried to recover Malwa for the Mughal Empire in December 1737. Bajirao advanced to oppose him. The Nizam was besieged at Bhopal. Durjansal Hada of Kotah marched to assist the Nizam. Early in January 1738, the Nizam capitulated. Immediately after this Bajirao accompanied by Malharrao Holkar and Jaswantrao Pawar invested Kotah in order to punish the Rao for his hostile act. They bombarded the town for forty days and "utterly devastated that district by plunder." Durjansal had to pay a sum of ten lakhs by way of fine.†

This state was subjected to heavy exaction in 1756 on the death of Durjansal, when a large succession duty was obtained from Ajit Singh Hada, the new ruler of Kotah. Antaji Mankeshwar wrote on 15 October 1756: "Before this the Maharao of Kotah (Durjansal) died childless. On hearing of it Dattaji by rapid marches went to Kotah and secured promise of 40‡ lakhs as *nazar*—20 lakhs were paid down and bonds given for the remaining 20 lakhs. He has come back to Ujjain."§

UDAIPUR (MEWAR)

Simultaneous respect and repression

The Sisodia house of Mewar (Udaipur) occupied a unique position in the whole of Rajasthan. This was the only family which had not submitted or given a girl in marriage to a Muslim prince. For this reason they enjoyed a peerless social position among the Hindus all over India.

In January 1736 Udaipur was visited by Peshwa Bajirao. The Maharana accorded him a warm welcome. At a public reception Bajirao showed his respect to the proud and noble house of the

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**Vamsha Bhaskar*, 3216-20, 3354-61; *SPD*, xiv, 10, 11, 13; *Sarkar*, i, 140,172,179-80, 194.

†*Vamsha Bhaskar*, 3249; *SPD*, xv, 68; xxii, 120; *Irvine*, ii, 304; *Sarkar*, i, 151-2.

‡*Vamsha Bhaskar*, iv, 3654-5 puts this amount at 12 lakhs.

§*SPD*, ii, 66; *Sarkar*, ii, 189, f.n.

Maharana Pratap by sitting on a lower level than the Maharana. The Peshwa also waved with his own hand the *chanwar* on the Maharana's head.

But in matters of money no sentiment was allowed to intervene. The Peshwa extorted a sum of seven lakhs of rupees from the Maharana as a gift for himself. An annual tribute of Rs. 1,60,000 was settled upon Udaipur. The parganah of Banhada was also snatched.*

The Maharana seems to have paid the annual tribute for some time, but in 1747 he declined to execute this undertaking. In 1753 the Maratha attempt to secure from the Maharana a sum of Rs. 5 lakhs also failed. Another claimant to the throne of Udaipur, Nathji, offered to the Marathas 15 lakhs if he could be installed, but this offer appears not to have been accepted†. In March 1757 Raghunathrao exacted one lakh of rupees and plundered Rani-khera‡. The Peshwa deputed Malharrao Holkar in July 1759 to realize tribute from Udaipur, but before visiting Mewar he got himself involved at Jaipur, and the Maharana escaped from molestation.

JODHPUR (MARWAR)

Ravages in Marwar, 1735-6

Abhay Singh§ Rathor was the Maharajah of Marwar from 1724 to 1749. His younger brother Bakht Singh¶ was the head of Nagor, and was always on the look-out for an opportunity to dispossess Abhay Singh. Taking advantage of this situation, Ranoji Sindhia and Malharrao Holkar invaded Marwar in April 1735. They sacked Merta and besieged the fort. After brisk fighting the Marathas were driven out of their trenches. Bajirao recalled them from Jodhpur in February 1736‖.

**Vamsha Bhaskar*, 3236-8; *SPD*, xiv, 50, 51, 54;. *Sarkar*, i, 145-6; *Sardesai* ii, 150.

†*SPD*, ii, 34; xxi, 58.

‡*Sarkar*, ii, 191.

§Abhay Singh was the son of Ajit Singh, who in 1714 was compelled to give away his daughter in marriage to Emperor Farrukh Siyar and keep Abhay Singh at the Mughal Court.

¶Bakht Singh had murdered his father Ajit Singh who had fallen in love with his wife. [*Irvine*, ii, 116-7.]

‖*SPD*, xiii, 49; xiv, 14, 51, 52, 56, 58; *Siyar*, ii, 84; *Irvine*, ii, 284; *Sarkar*, i, 148, f.n.

Jayappa Sindhia in Marwar, 1752

Abhay Singh died in June 1749.* His son Ram Singh succeeded to the throne of Jodhpur and headship of the Rathor clan. In November 1750 Bakht Singh attacked him. In the battle fought near Merta Ram Singh was defeated. He fled to Jaipur. Bakht Singh seized Jodhpur, and crowned himself king in July 1751. He already held Gujrat†. He occupied Ajmer, a Mughal territory, in 1752.

Ram Singh approached Jayappa Sindhia for military help. While escorting Ghazi-ud-din from Delhi to the Deccan in June 1752, Jayappa came to Rajasthan. With a small contingent of Marathas he attacked Bakht Singh, but was defeated. Jayappa did not pursue the matter further, and left for the Deccan. Bakht Singh died in September 1752, and was succeeded by his son Bijay Singh‡.

Marathas Support Ram Singh, 1754-5

When Raghunathrao with a huge Maratha army reached Jaipur in November 1753, Ram Singh waited upon Jayappa and sought his assistance. The Marathas were then planning a campaign against Surajmal, and so Ram Singh was assured of Maratha help soon after the settlement of Jat affairs. When the siege of Kumbher was over, Raghunath retired to Delhi. It was from here that Raghunath sent Jayappa with 4,000 troops of his own added to the 6,000 of the personal contingent of the Sindhia on 23 June 1754 to aid Ram Singh against Bijay Singh. Ram Singh had also secured help from his Rathor kinsmen. A fierce battle was fought at Merta on 15 September 1754 in which Bijay Singh was completely routed. The vanquished prince took shelter in Nagor. He was immediately besieged. The rigours of a strict and protracted siege created intense distress in the fort. Water supply in the tank became exhausted. Food grew scarce. Salt was sold at 1½ seers to the rupee. Fodder for horses was unavailable. But Bijay Singh held out bravely§.

Jayappa Sindhia Murdered, July 1755

Meanwhile Jayappa was carrying fire and sword everywhere in Marwar. Ajmer fell to him in February 1755. Many other places

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**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 21 June 1749.

†*Ibid*, dated 29 June 1748

‡*Sarkar*, i, 171, 179.

§*Ibid*, ii, 14—6, 176.

including Jalor "where the accumulated treasures of Bijay Singh had been secreted" were captured. Jodhpur was attacked, but this also did not compel Bijay Singh to yield, though like a seasoned diplomat he continued regular negotiations for peace.

Jayappa lay encamped on the banks of the Peacock-lake (Taussar) 11 kilometres from the fort of Nagor. Bijay Singh's agents accompanied by a large number of assistants, clerks and servants would often visit the Maratha camp to settle terms. On Thursday morning, 24 July 1755, the Jodhpur envoy Bijay Bharati Gosavi attended by a large number of followers came to Jayappa. A few Rajputs and Gujars in the guise of Maratha menials also accompanied him at a short distance. Jayappa's tent was pitched in the centre of the Maratha camp. On one side of his tent Maratha horses were tied in long lines. Jayappa was a homely sort of a person. He would keep on discussing matters as well as attending to his own daily routine. At 11 O'clock he began to bathe sitting on a broad wooden stool. Then he began to rub a towel on his head. Just at this moment when the towel was over his eyes, two of Gosavi's followers disguised as Maratha horse attendants who while picking up horse-grain were looking out for an opportunity, suddenly sprang upon Jayappa and stabbed him to death. While dying Jayappa nominated his son Jankoji as his successor and Dattaji Sindhia his guardian. The entire Rajput party was instantly cut to pieces.*

Bijay Singh sues for peace, February 1756

Bijay Singh tried to build up a coalition of the Hindu and Muslim powers. He invited the Emperor, Wazir Imad-ul-mulk, Najib-ud-daulah, Rohillas of the trans—Ganga region, as well as Surajmal Jat, Madho Singh of Jaipur and others. The Rajput princes supported him. Raja Madho Singh deputed his general Anurudh Singh at the head of a strong force. Dattaji Sindhia checked his progress on the way to Didwana. In a battle fought on 16 October 1755 the Rajput commander was defeated, and Madho Singh had to relieve him by promising to pay 5 lakhs. Another contingent of Bijay Singh was besieged at Daulatpur. The blockade of the Nagor fort was carried on so relentlessly that Bijay Singh was reduced to

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**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 21a, 59a; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 26 July 1755; *Rajwade*, i, 37, 39, 44; vi, 327, 341; *SPD*, xxi, 67,69; xxvii, 105, 106 108, 116, 148; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 400b; *Vansha Bhaskar*, iv, 3649-52; *Sarkar*, ii, 180-1; *Sardesai*, ii, 383-4.

extremities. Other Maratha commanders also had commenced joining the Sindhias. Bijay Singh felt compelled to sue for peace.

Bijay Singh called on Dattaji and accepted the terms imposed upon him. (1) He surrendered the fort and district of Ajmer to the Marathas. (2) He agreed to pay an indemnity of fifty lakhs of rupees. The first instalment of 25 lakhs was to be paid in one year, and the balance in the following two years. (3) The city of Jalor and half of Marwar was to be handed over to Ram Singh. Only the first term of the treaty was fulfilled, the rest remained only on paper.*

JAIPUR

Jai Singh assists Marathas in securing Malwa

The Maratha conflict with Rajputs commenced in Malwa. In November 1728 the Marathas had slain the Mughal Governor of Malwa. Since then their influence in this province began to grow rapidly. The Emperor was keen to recover this province. He appointed Sawai Jai Singh Kachhwa (1699-1743) the Governor of Malwa. He supplied the Rajput Raja a sum of 20 lakhs of rupees for the purpose of driving out the Marathas. Jai Singh reached Ujjain in December 1732. Ranoji Sindhia and Malharrao Holkar advanced against him in January 1733. Jai Singh was so much hard-pressed that he had to make peace with them in February 1733 by offering six lakhs out of the amount given by the Emperor, and by ceding twenty-eight parganahs for payment of Chauth†.

Emperor fails in driving out the Marathas from Rajasthan, 1735

The occupation of Malwa served as a jumping off ground to the Marathas for their penetration into Rajasthan. They began to intervene in its internal affairs. Muhammad Shah despatched his Wazir to Malwa and Mir Bakhshi Khan-e-Dauran to Rajasthan to expel the Marathas from these regions. Khan-e-Dauran left the capital in November 1734. He was joined on the way by Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur, Durjansal of Kotah and Abhay Singh of Jodhpur. The Maratha light cavalry under Sindhia and Holkar hovered round the Mughal camp cutting off its supplies of food and fodder, killing the stragglers and seizing equippage and animals.

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* *SPD*, ii, 54,56,62,63,65; xxi, 70,82,83,85; xxvii, 128; *Sarkar*, ii, 188-9.

† *SPD*, xiv, 2; xv, 6.

Then the Marathas suddenly disappeared from the scene, dashed upon their rear, and plundered Kotah, Bundi, Jaipur, and some parts of Jodhpur territory. Sambhar belonging to the Emperor was thoroughly squeezed. Its chief Fakhar-ud-daulah was stripped of every thing, and then allowed to go with only the clothes he wore. His Qazi slew his women after the manner of the Rajputs, and then fought with the Marathas. Through Sawai Jai Singh's mediation, Khan-e-Dauran made peace in March 1735 by agreeing to pay the Marathas twenty-two lakhs of rupees as the Chauth of Malwa*.

The Peshwa's Mother visits Rajasthan, 1735

At the time when Maratha forces were fighting the imperial armies in Malwa and Rajasthan, Radhabai mother of Peshwa Bajirao, undertook a tour of pilgrimage. Such was the Maratha prestige at this time that from numerous places invitations came requesting her to visit various cities and shrines. She left Poona on 14 February 1735, crossed the river Tapti at Burhanpur on 9 March and the Narbada on 18 April. An escort of 1,000 horsemen was offered by the Emperor to wait upon her from river Narbada.

In Rajasthan she was received with the highest respect by Rajput princes who introduced her to their queens and made her rich offerings. She visited Udaipur on 6 May, Nath Dwara on 18 May, and reached Jaipur on 21 June. Owing to Jai Singh's earnest solicitations she stayed at Jaipur for three months.

She travelled to Mathura, Brindaban, Kurukshetra, Prayag, Banaras and Gaya. Passing through Bundelkhand and Sagar she reached Poona in May 1736†.

Peshwa meets Sawai Jai Singh, February 1736

As has already been mentioned, Bajirao was at Udaipur in January 1736. From Udaipur the Peshwa advanced towards Jaipur. Sawai Raja Jai Singh came to receive him on the way. The interview which took place at a village 48 kilometers east of Ajmer is thus described by Sir Jadunath Sarkar: "A pavilion was pitched in the middle for the meeting while the two armies stood fully armed on the two sides, (c. 15 February). The two chiefs descended from their elephants, embraced, and sat down on the same cushion, the

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**Siyar*, ii, 83; *SPD*, xiv, 21, 23, 27; xxii, 284; *Elliot*, viii, 51.

†*SPD*, ix, 12,13,14; xiv, 21,31,39,51; xxii, 330; *Vamsha Bhaskar*, 3223; *Sarkar*, i, 142-3; *Sardesai*, ii, 147-9.

Peshwa on the right and Jai Singh on the left. Bajirao, in spite of his being a priest by caste and the prime minister of the greatest Hindu Rajah in India, had the manners of a moss-trooper, which had been anything but improved by his infatuation for Mastani, a Muslim girl with the morals of a vivandiere. He puffed at his pipe, blowing the smoke in the face of his host. Now, the Jaipur Rajah, though a Rajput, was a man of refined taste, and had consorted with scholarly Europeans. He did not enjoy this rough horse-play of the Deccani, but was powerless to check it".*

Bajirao expressed his desire to go to Delhi and get the previous year's treaty made with Khan-e-Dauran confirmed by the Emperor. Jai Singh advised Bajirao to come to the north the following year with greater preparation. He also promised to use his personal influence with the Emperor in securing ratification of the treaty. Jai Singh then paid the Peshwa two lakhs in cash and three lakhs worth of goods as hi *snazar*.

One month later under advice from Jai Singh, the Emperor conferred the post of the deputy Governor of Malwa upon the Peshwa with his son Prince Mahmud as Governor only in name. The Peshwa now became the real master of Malwa. This province was formally ceded to the Marathas in July 1741†.

Marathas join war of succession at Jaipur, 1743-50

It was pointed out before that the Mewar house of Udaipur was held in the highest esteem by the Hindus, and it enjoyed the supreme social position amongst the Rajput princes. Sawai Jai Singh had married a princess of Mewar, sister of Maharana Jagat Singh of Udaipur, on the express condition that the male child born to the princess would succeed to the throne of Jaipur in preference to his eldest -born son. Madho Singh was the son of this princess.

Sawai Jai Singh died in September 1743. His eldest son Ishwari Singh succeeded him. His younger brother Madho Singh demanded half of the patrimony. Ishwari Singh declined to part with it. Madho Singh was supported by his uncle Jagat Singh. His diplomatic agent became a brother to Jayappa Sindhia by exchanging turbans. He also promised to Malharrao Holkar a sum of twenty lakhs for help.

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* *Sarkar*, i, 147.

† *SPD*, xiii, 48; xiv, 52,55,56,62; xv, 86; xxii, 331,333; *Vamsha Bhaskar*, 3238-40; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 376a—377a; *Sarkar*, i, 147,149,155.

MAHARAJA JAI SINGH

Courtesy : Phoenix Publications Bombay

RAJA MADHO SINGH

Courtesy : Phoenix Publications Bombay

Ishwari Singh managed to win over Ranoji Sindhia by offering a higher price, but Malhar remained steadfast. Thus the two Maratha chiefs joined rival groups, Ranoji supporting the elder and Malhar the younger brother.

Malhar in opposition to Ranoji's wishes deputed his son Khanderao to demand from Ishwari Singh four districts of Newai, Malpura, Toda and Tonk for Madho Singh. Ranoji despatched a force under his Diwan Ramchandra Baba to resist Malhar's demand. In an action the combined forces of Madho Singh and Jagat Singh were defeated in February 1745.

Both the brothers fought a fierce battle in March 1747, in which Ishwari Singh was again victorious, but both the Maratha chiefs secured considerable booty. Madho Singh sought Peshwa's assistance. The Peshwa who was at first supporting Ishwari Singh declared in favour of Madho Singh for a sum of 15 lakhs. This decision was opposed by Ramchandra Baba who stated that the Marathas would get a bad name and no money. Balajirao decided to settle the dispute personally on the spot. The Peshwa visited Rajasthan in May 1748. Madho Singh waited upon him at Newai, 63 kilometres south of Jaipur. At the Peshwa's mediation Ishwari Singh agreed to surrender four districts to Madho Singh. Malharrao Holkar stood surety for the execution of the agreement. The Peshwa received from Madho Singh a tribute of ten lakhs*.

Marathas defeat Ishwari Singh, August 1748

Ishwari Singh declined to surrender the four districts to his brother. Malharrao Holkar and Gangadhar Tatya advanced upon Jaipur in July 1748, forcibly seized Malpura, Toda and Tonk and delivered them to Madho Singh. Ishwari Singh fought with Marathas at Bagru on 1 August 1748. He was supported by Surajmal Jat. The battle lasted for six days. The Marathas cut off noses and ears of a convoy carrying supplies to Ishwari Singh. He was compelled to restore Bundi to Ummed Singh, cede five districts to Madho Singh, and promised a large tribute to Malharrao Holkar†.

Ishwari Singh commits suicide, December 1750

Sindhia and Holkar remained in the Deccan for nearly two years. The Maratha agents demanded the promised tribute from Ishwari

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*_Vamsha Bhaskar_, 3328, 3380, 3460-8; _SPD_, ii, 3,4,11; xxi, 17,24; xxvii, 18, 19, 26, 30; _Sarkar_, i, 156-64; _Sardesai_, ii, 234-7.

†_Rajwade_, vi, 190,191,581; _SPD_, ii, 17, 23.

Singh who put them off. The Peshwa ordered Sindhia and Holkar to realize money from Jaipur. In November 1750 Malhar and Gangadhar Tatya occupied Mukundara pass, and advanced towards Jaipur. Ishwari Singh's men met them on the way and offered two lakhs. Malharrao scolded them for this small offer, and threatened coercion.

When Malharrao was thirty-two kilometres from Jaipur, Ishwari Singh felt terrified, as he had no ready money to offer. He was extremely worried over the increasing Maratha oppression. In a fit of despair and despondency he decided to commit suicide. On the night between 12 and 13 December he ordered his servant to bring some poison and a live cobra into his bedroom on the pretext that he wanted to prepare a certain medicine. He also summoned his four queens into the same room. At midnight all of them swallowed poison and got themselves bitten by the cobra. In the early hours of the morning they expired. His twenty maids became *sati* on his funeral pyre*.

Madho Singh made ruler of Jaipur, December 1750

Now Malharrao invited Madho Singh to assume sovereignty of Jaipur. He was admitted to the palace on 29 December 1750. Jayappa Sindhia reached Jaipur on 6 January 1751. The new ruler offered ten lakhs as a tribute including the balance of five lakhs already promised to the Peshwa. The Marathas demanded in addition the cession of one-third or at least one-fourth of his country. This was deeply resented not only by Madho Singh but also by his nobles and people alike†.

Marathas massacred at Jaipur, January 1751

Finding himself without a rival, Madho Singh made up his mind to get rid of the Maratha generals by destroying them. He invited them to a feast where poisoned food was to be served to them. Malhar agreed to dine, but Jayappa declined, and nobody attended it. He then prepared sweetmeats mixed with arsenic for distribution

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**SPD*, ii, 19,31; xxi, 34; *Vamsha Bhaskar*, 3608-16; *Sarkar*, i, 165-8; Sardesai, ii, 239.

Vamsha Bhaskar on p. 3615 says that when Khanderao tried to seize prettiest maids of Ishwari Singh, they burnt themselves alive on the pyre of their dead master.

†*SPD*, ii, 31; xxvii, 65.

among Maratha officers and soldiers. Seventy-five kilograms of white arsenic was dissolved in sweet drinks. The Marathas avoided this entertainment completely . Afterwards he invited Maratha chiefs to come to a meeting where he had contrived to assassinate them. This plot also failed.

The Marathas now threw themselves into the Rajput trap. The city of Jaipur had been built by the late Sawai Jai Singh on the latest designs. It was famous throughout India for its artistic planning, and its beautiful temples and markets. The Marathas before leaving the place expressed a desire to see the inner parts of the city. Having failed in all his previous schemes, Madho Singh welcomed this opportunity to punish the Marathas. On 10 January 1751, after having had breakfast, about 4,000 Marathas including some women and children entered the city. Madho Singh resorted to a perfidious stratagem. He closed the city gates at noon, and then the general massacre of the Marathas began by the Rajput soldiers and the residents of the town. Only seventy men escaped from slaughter by jumping down from ramparts and thus breaking their limbs. All of their property including fine horses, jewellery and money was plundered. Even in the country—side the Maratha stragglers and messengers were done for in cold blood. Having committed this heinous crime, Madho Singh became a deadly foe of the Marathas, and looked up to the Rohilla Afghans and Ahmad Shah Durrani for support and guidance against the Marathas.

With inadequate troops at their disposal, the Maratha generals gave up the idea to retaliate at once. At this time the Delhi Wazir, Safdar Jang, was fighting against the Bangash and Rohilla Afghans. He had been imploring for Maratha assistance for some time past in return for 50 lakhs of rupees. His agent Raja Ramnarayan was then present in the Maratha camp. He was urging them to march immediately to support his master. No propspect was in sight for getting money from Madho Singh. So in the beginning of February 1751, the Marathas raised their camp, and advanced towards Agra on their way to Farrukhabad*.

Dispute over tribute with Madho Singh

Madho Singh had agreed to pay a sum of ten lakhs of rupees to the Marathas for placing him on the throne of Jaipur in December

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**SPD*, ii, 31; xxvii, 64, 65; *Vamsha Bhaskar*, 3622.

1750. For the murder of nearly 4,000 Marathas and plunder of their property in January 1751 a fine of 5¼ lakhs was imposed upon him. A *nazarana* of 1¼ lakhs was demanded from him in honour of the first visit to Jaipur of Peshwa's brother Raghunathrao in November 1753. Out of this total of 16½ lakhs of rupees Jago Pandit, Minister of Jaipur, paid to Jayappa Sindhia in April 1755 a sum of Rs. 7,35,074 in cash and three lakhs in cheques on bankers. The balance to be paid amounted to Rs. 6,14,926. On the death of Jayappa Sindhia in July 1755, Madho Singh despatched his general Anurudh Singh to fight the Marathas. He was defeated and besieged in October 1755. To secure his release Madho Singh promised a further tribute of five lakhs. But the entire amount remained unpaid. When Raghunathrao marched to the north, he came to Jaipur in March 1757, and demanded clearance of arears. As Madho Singh paid no heed to it, the Maratha general invested Barwara, 32 kilometres west of Ranthambhor and 25 kilometres north-west of Sawai Madhopur railway station.

The Jaipur Minister Kaniram offered to pay all the arrears, but Raghunath demanded 40 lakhs more and cession of certain Jaipur territories. These humiliating terms were rejected by Madho Singh and fighting continued as before. After three months' useless siege Raghunath settled at eleven lakhs. Of this six lakhs were paid immediately and five lakhs were added to the previous arrears. Out of the six lakhs recieved four lakhs went to Raghunath and two lakhs to Malharrao.

In September 1758 Jankoji Sindhia visited Jaipur to coerce Madho Singh for payment. He imposed a fine of 36 lakhs to be paid in four equal annual instalments with an additional amount of 3 lakhs in the first year as *nazar*. No sum was realized at the time. The total amount to be paid by Madho Singh now stood at Rs. 55,14,926*.

Malharrao fails to realize tribute from Jaipur, October-December 1759

In July 1759 the Peshwa ordered Malharrao Holkar to recover all the arrears from Rajasthan including Udaipur. His instructions were "not to spare the Maharana's feelings, but to exercise every

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**SPD*, ii, 94,95,96,101; xxi, 120, 121; xxvii, 108, 152a, 155, 230, 236; *Rajwade*, i, 52,53,63,71; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 202a; *Sarkar*, ii, 174, 183-94.

kind of harshness that was likely to enforce payment from the defaulter".*

Malhar turned his attention first to Jaipur from where a large amount of tribute was due. He reached there in October 1759. Madho Singh took up his position in the fortified city of Jaipur. As he was in regular communication with Ahmad Shah Durrani and Najib-ud-daulah, he knew that the Durrani was expected in India in November 1759, and the Maratha commander would have to retire immediately. So he held out bravely. In November 1759, a Rajput force of 4,000 came out to assault the Marathas, but they were repulsed with heavy losses. Afterwards no Rajput ventured to oppose Malhar in the open. He attacked Barwara fort and captured it by allowing the garrison to leave in safety. On 27 December 1759 he got a letter from Dattaji Sindhia inviting him to march to Delhi at once as Ahmad Shah Durrani had arrived at Sarhind. He raised the siege and left for the imperial capital on 2 January 1760.†

**SPD*, 167,172; *Sarkar*, ii, 196.

†*SPD*, ii, 113, 115, 117; xxi. 167, 172, 177; *Rajwade*, i, 150; *Sarkar* ii, 195-7.

CHAPTER V

INJUDICIOUS DEALINGS WITH JATS, ROHILLAS AND AVADH

JATS

Homeland and Character of Jats

Jats are found in the region stretching from the banks of the Indus across the Panjab to the borders of Rajasthan as far as Gwalior in the south and to the river Ganga in the east. In the west they are exclusively Muslims, about the centre they are Sikhs, and in the east they are Hindus. The Hindu Jats prevail in the Delhi–Agra belt covering the districts of Hissar, Rohtak, Gurgaon, Delhi, Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Bulandshahar, Aligarh, Mathura, Agra and Bharatpur.

The Jats everywhere are a sturdy race of people, honest, industrious and independent. They were mainly cultivators and peaceful citizens. They paid land revenue quietly, but they would not tolerate any oppression, and would often revolt and sacrifice all for the maintenance of individual freedom. Feelings of mutual rivalry and jealousy being too strong in their minds, they proved themselves poor empire-builders. But the Jats of Bharatpur side displayed remarkable skill in providing political leadership to the community, and in carving out an independent kingdom of their own*.

Rise of the Jat Power

The Jats rose in rebellion in the neighbourhood of the two imperial capitals, Delhi and Agra. Their revolt was mainly due to the administrative oppression and religious persecution in the reign of Aurangzeb. Rajaram Jat assumed leadership of the aggrieved Hindus of the Mathura district. As many as 20,000 daring Jat youths joined him in course of time. Aurangzeb fought against Rajaram, and lost 4,000 Mughal soldiers in the battle; but he failed to subdue

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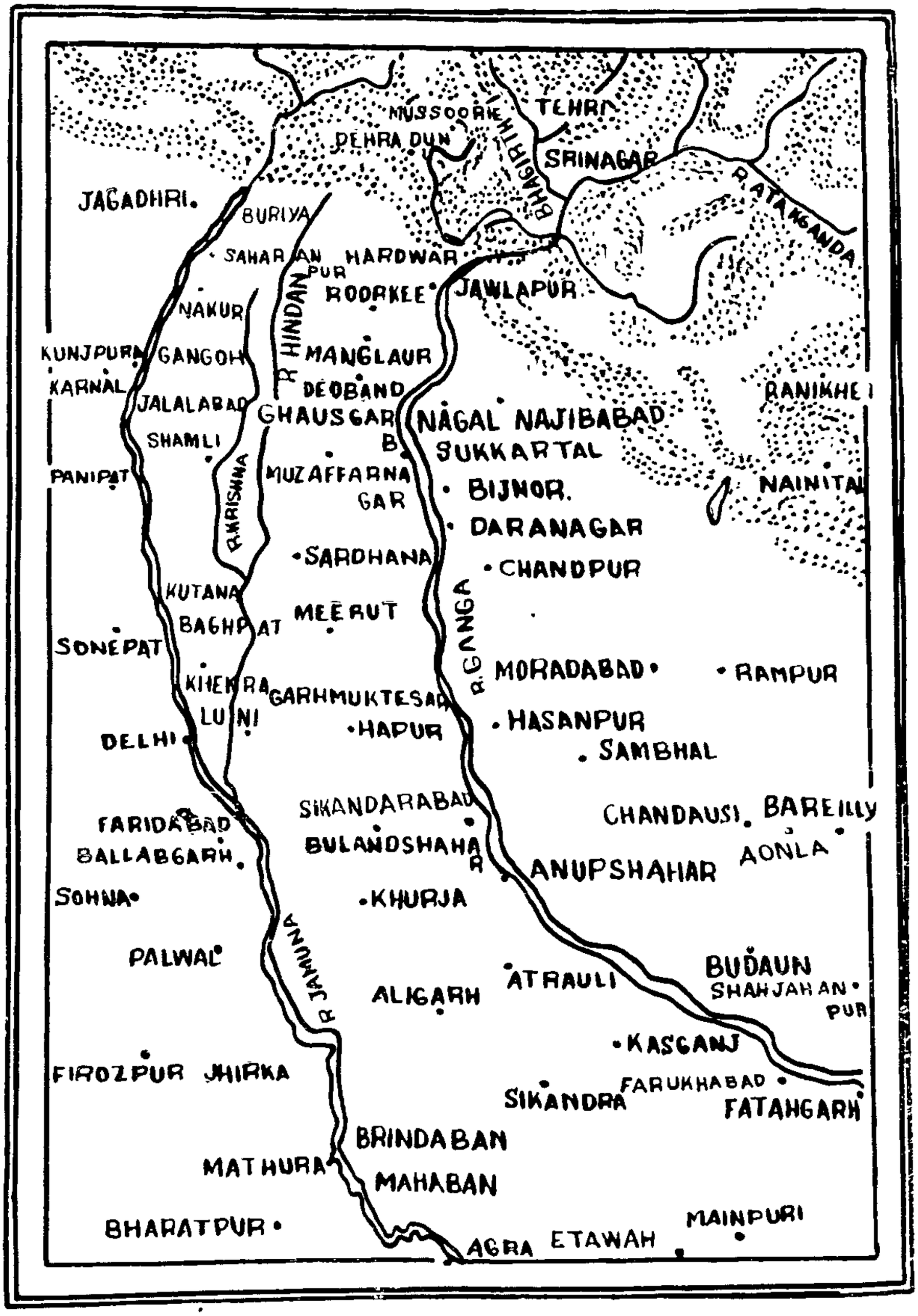
*Rose, *Glossary of Panjab Tribes*, quoted by *Sarkar*, ii, 417-8, 421.

TO ILLUSTRATE MARATHA RELATIONS WITH JATS, ROHILLAS AND AVADH



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him. Raja Ram Singh of Amber (Jaipur) fought a series of actions against the Jat leader. He also could not crush him.

On the death of Rajaram, the headship of the clan passed on to Churaman, who, being generous to his followers, added to his numbers greatly. Bahadur Shah conferred upon him the rank of 1500 Zat and 500 Sowars, and appointed him the guard on the highroad between Delhi and Agra. In 1710 he was present at the siege of Lohgarh against Banda Bahadur. At Lahore in the war of succession in 1712 he mainly resorted to plunder. The following year in the battle between Jahandar Shah and Farrukh Siyar he again took to plundering not even sparing the imperial women's apartments. Farrukh Siyar extended his charge of the highway from Delhi to river Chambal. Churaman threw up a mud fort at village Thun where he established his headquarters.

The rapid rise of the Jat power aroused alarm and hatred of Sawai Jai Singh son of Ram Singh. With the ready approval of Muhammad Shah he led an expedition against Churaman in 1721 and inflicted a crushing defeat upon him. The Jat capital, Thun, was razed to the ground and was ploughed by asses. Churaman could not bear this insult and committed suicide. Churaman's followers dispersed to their homes. Thus the entire work of Rajaram and Churaman was completely undone.

The fortunes of the family were built from fresh foundations by Churaman's nephew Badan Singh. He made a thorough submission to Jai Singh. Quite contrary to the Jat character he conducted himself in relation to Jai Singh both in private and public so humbly that he won his full confidence. Being very able and energetic he deeply impressed his master who now believed that in raising Badan Singh to power was his own glory. He granted Badan Singh "the *tika*, the *nishan*, the kettle-drum, the five-coloured flag, and the title of Braja-raja (or lord of the holy land of Mathura*)". Badan Singh never assumed the title of Raja, called himself a Thakur, and openly confessed himself a *Zamindar* of Jaipur State.

Badan Singh subdued all the Jat landlords, and recruited a large force of Jat infantry and cavalry. He built four forts at Bharatpur, Kumbher, Dig and Ver. They were strongly fortified, garrisoned and stored with munitions and provisions so that they became

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**Sarkar*, ii, 428.

almost impregnable, and were never taken by Marathas in spite of their long siege or even by the Durrani. He heavily bribed the Delhi Wazir, Qamr-ud-din Khan, thus getting his lawless activities unpunished. Badan Singh "roamed freely over the province, demolishing houses, gardens and mosques, disfiguring them for the sake of a knob of copper, a piece of marble or a bit of iron. Every gate, stone slab, and beam was carried off from these old edifices to the places which the Jats were then building . At the same time these tribesmen, in bands of two to three hundred each armed with sword and musket, carrying hatchets and torches in their hands and blowing their trumpets, broke into the houses of the rich, which they had previously divided among themselves and carefully noted where the owner was not in a position to offer resistance."*

Badan Singh had 150 wives, some married while others forcibly acquired, and had a numerous progeny of sons and daughters. While seeing their father, each announced his or her mother's name and his or her own name and number†.

Rajah Surajmal

One day a young married woman with a male child in her lap came to see her sister who was in Badan Singh's harem. The Jat chief having cast a glance at her felt fascinated and immediately reduced her to a concubine. She soon rose to be his best favourite. Her child whose name was Surajmal displayed so much intelligence that he also got the first position among all the children of Badan Singh. "Suraj Mal's outstanding genius made it clear to all that he was the fittest man to lead the rising Jat nation. So, Badan Singh adopted Surajmal as his son and successor, with the full approval of the elders of the clan, setting aside the offspring of his body‡". Badan Singh's sagacity came out to be true, as Surajmal proved himself the ablest, wisest and shrewdest ruler and statesman not only of the Jats but in the whole of India in his age. A famous Muslim historian, a contemporary of Surajmal, calls him "the eye and the shining taper of the Jat tribe; a prince who rendered himself famous by his good manners and civil deportment as well as by his conquests, and his superior knowledge in the arts of

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**Sarkar*, ii, 430-1.
†*Ibid*, 432.
‡*Ibid*, 433.

government: qualifications in which he had not then, and never has had since, his equal amongst the Hindu Princes*."

The Jat territory was now surrounded on the north by the Mughals, to the west by Rajputs who dominated Alwar, Mewat and Narnaul, in the south by Marathas who were firmly established in Malwa, and on the east by Ganga Doab, which belonged to the Mughals, but was claimed by Rohillas, Bangash Afghans, Nawab of Avadh and Marathas. Thus hemmed in by difficult neighbours on all sides, it was a tough job to preserve Jat independence. But Surajmal was clever enough to steer clearly of all these tangles.

Surajmal's first contact with the Marathas, August 1748

During the later part of his reign Badan Singh stayed at home, and seldom stirred out on any military expedition or civil administrative† business. These duties were performed by Surajmal. The first Maratha contact with the Jats was with Surajmal, and that also on the battle-field.

A strong Maratha army under Malharrao Holkar invaded Jaipur in July 1748. Sawai Ishwari Singh called on his vassal Badan Singh to assist him. The Jat chief immediately despatched Surajmal at the head of a force of 10,000 strong. A fierce battle was fought on 1 August 1748 at Bagru, which continued for six days. Malhar's Diwan Gangadhar Tatya captured Ishwari Singh's guns after a heavy assault. Surajmal at once attacked him, fought desperately, and pushed him back with great slaughter‡.

Ballu Jat's Rise and Fall, 1750-53

Among the numerous followers of Surajmal, there was a Ballu Jat of Faridabad, 26 kilometres south of Delhi. He seized a large number of villages in the close proximity of the capital. Safdar Jang Wazir sent an expedition against him on 3 June 1750. He was captured at Shamspur near Delhi. He was brought with his wrists tied together to Khizarabad 8 kilometres from Delhi where the Wazir along with the Maratha *Vakil* lay encamped. "Safdar Jang handed him over to the *Vakil* and himself returned to his *haveli*§".

**Siyar-ul-mutakharin*, quoted in *Najibuddaulah*, xlii.

†Badan Singh had become blind. He died at Dig on 7 June 1756, and was formally succeeded by Surajmal.

‡*Rajwade* vi, pp. 291, 648; *Purandare Daftar*, i, nos. 185, 196; *Sarkar*, i, 164.

§*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 3 June 1750. *Haveli* means a residential mansion.

Ballu's submission was only a temporary phase. He won over the Maratha *vakil* and through him Safdar Jang as well. In the winter of 1750 he threw up a mud fort, 8 kilometres south of Faridabad, and called it after his own name Ballugarh, also known as Ballamgarh or Ballabgarh. He set himself up as a collector in this area, and was confirmed in this position by Safdar Jang. Slowly and gradually Ballu extended his depredations farther. In 1752 he ravaged Sikandarabad, 50 kilometres south of Delhi. He dug floors of houses, and fleeced the people of whatever they possessed. "Seizing the local tradesmen, he hung them up and flogged them to extort money*".

It was in November 1753, that the Delhi Government took notice of the lawless activities of Ballu. An expedition consisting of 500 Badakhshis under Aqibat Mahmud and 2000 Marathas under Gangadhar Tatya reinforced by 7,000 soldiers and 30 light guns was despatched against him by Imad-ul-mulk, a rival and opponent of Safdar Jang. They besieged Ballabgarh . Ballu sued for peace. He waited upon Aqibat Mahmud, accompanied by his son, Diwan, nine military lieutenants and 250 troopers. The interview was held on 29 November 1753. It was a stormy meeting as Ballu used hot words in the course of discussion. Ballu and his companions were instantly cut to pieces, while his soldiers fled away. Ballu's head was displayed on the road near Faridabad. The pearl ear rings were removed from his ears. Ballabgarh was named Nizamgarh†.

Khanderao's Operations against the Jats, December 1753-January 1754

At this time a large Maratha force lay encamped near Delhi. It was commanded by Khanderao, son of Malharrao Holkar, and husband of the famous Ahalyabai. The Emperor was keenly desirous of seeing Khanderao. He sent the Maratha chief 2,200 gold *mohars* and costly presents, which Khanderao declined to accept without the approval of his father who was then in Rajasthan. Khanderao was prevailed upon to see the Emperor with the utmost difficulty, on 1 December 1753. Instead of the usual four bows he bowed rather unwillingly only twice. He took no presents with him. The Chamberlain gave him 21 gold coins from his own pocket, put them

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**Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 22b—23a; *Sarkar*, i, 207-8.

†*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 89a—92a, 96a, 97b, 106b; *Sarkar*, i, 286-7.

before the Emperor, and shouted: "Khandoji presents a *nazar* of a hundred *mohars*, an elephant, and a horse". A robe of honour was ordered for him. He put it on after great hesitation and discussion. This strange behaviour was due to his being addicted to heavy drinking day and night*.

Khanderao was then sent out against the Jats. He took up his position at Hodal, and from here as a base his troops ravaged the Jat villages within a radius of 25 kilometres. He drove away Surajmal's son, and established Maratha military posts. Khanderao stayed here for a month and a half. About the middle of January 1754, he joined his father, when the Marathas were planning to besiege Kumbher, a fortress of Surajmal†.

Khanderao killed at Kumbher, 15 March 1754

The main Maratha army under Raghunathrao numbering about 80,000 left Jaipur on 15 January 1754, and the next day they entered the territory of Raja Surajmal Jat. The Jat army opposed their advance. A fierce pitched battle was fought near Dig in which both sides suffered heavily. Overcome by the sheer weight of numbers the Jat Raja sought for peace. "Surajmal went to the farthest limit of conciliation in trying to avoid a war. For this purpose he sent his trusted Brahman Minister Ruparam Kothari to purchase Maratha friendship offering to pay 40 lacs as the price of peace. Raghunathrao haughtily demanded one crore, upon which the Jat raja returned a small packet of gunpowder and shots in answer‡".

Surajmal took up a defensive position in the fort of Kumbher. It was immediately besieged. Raghunathrao lay encamped before it from 20 January to 22 May 1754. At Malharrao's command Khanderao also came from Hodal and joined him in the siege. The Marathas could not make any impression on the garrison for want of heavy guns. Khanderao laid trenches under two covered alleys leading to the walls of the fort. On 15 March 1754 he went out in a palanquin to inspect the trenches. He was sighted by the garrison and subjected to heavy fire, and was instantly killed.

Khanderao was the only son of Malharrao Holkar. His death at the young age of thirty cast a gloom over all the Marathas. His

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**Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 88a—b; *Sarkar*, i, 290.
†*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 93b, 94b; *Sarkar*, i, 288.
‡*Sardesai*, ii, 377.

three wives and seven concubines committed *sati*. Only his fourth wife Ahalyabai survived him at Malhar's imploration. She later rose to the highest fame as an ideal widow and ruler. Malhar performed the obsequies at Mathura. Surajmal though besieged expressed his deep grief and sent mourning clothes to Malharrao and Khanderao's son Malrao. The Emperor sent robes of mourning to Malhar and ornaments to Khanderao's mother. Imad-ul-mulk came to Kumbher to condole.

Peace was made in May 1754. Surajmal agreed to pay thirty lakhs in three instalments. Raghunathrao left for Mathura on 22 May 1754*.

Rapprochement between Surajmal and Raghunathrao, 1754

After the withdrawal of Maratha forces from Kumbher, an understanding was arrived at between Surajmal and Raghunathrao. Surajmal gave an undertaking neither to put any obstacle in the way of Maratha expansion in the Ganga Doab nor hinder the frequent movements of Maratha armies through his territory from south to north and vice versa. Raghunathrao permitted him to seize imperial territory in the provinces of Agra and Delhi†.

Surajmal took advantage of this rapprochement immediately. He seized Palwal, 58 kilometres south of Delhi, on 27 September 1754. The Jats killed Santokhrai, Qanungo of Palwal, who had incited the murder of Ballu Jat. The Qazi of the place was also captured. The Wazir, Imad-ul-mulk, approached Malharrao to assist him in driving away Surajmal. Malharrao took him to Raghunathrao on 29 September 1754. The Maratha general told him: "We have come to an understanding with Surajmal. We will not break our promise. You need not worry about it. I shall send a message to Surajmal not to encroach upon your *jagirs*‡".

The rapprochement continued up to August 1760. Surajmal made full use of this period. In November 1755 he regained Ballabgarh and Ghasira, and on 23 April 1756 took possession of the famous fort of Alwar. He also acquired lands in the Ganga Doab, and secured Koil (modern Aligarh)§.

**Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 108b—110a, 115b, 117b, 121b, 125a, 127a, 128a; *SPD*, xxvii, 79, 94, 104; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 19 March 1754; *Sarkar*, i, 291-3.

†*Father Wendel*, quoted by *Sarkar*, ii, 438.

‡*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 22a.

§*Ibid*, 57-8.

When the huge Maratha army came to northern India in 1757, and again in 1760, he met the Maratha generals, and supplied a small contingent of his troops to remain in attendance upon them. Thus he tried to maintain tolerably good relations with the Marathas as far as possible.

ROHILLAS

Rohilla settlements in Katehr

Rohillas were the Yusafzai Afghans of Roh, a region covering portions of Afghanistan and North-West Frontier Province. It was bounded on the east by Swat and Kashmir, in the south by river Indus, to the west by river Helmand, and on the north by Chitral.

The Afghans had established their empires in India twice under Lodhis and Surs, both of which were destroyed by the Mughals. The Rohillas wished to wipe out the Mughal Empire and constitute in its place an Afghan empire under Ahmad Shah Durrani.

On the firm establishment of the Mughal rule in India, the Afghan ruling families had been either thoroughly subjugated or reduced to the position of common men. Fresh recuits started coming into India from barren parts of Roh after the death of Aurangzeb. Large swarms of them migrated at the time of Nadir Shah*.

They settled into a rich territory forming an irregular triangle bounded on the north by Siwalik and Kumaon hills, to the south and east by Avadh and in the west by river Ganga. Its average length was about 300 kilometres and width nearly half of it. The important towns situated in this tract were Aonla, Bareilly, Moradabad, Rampur, Pilibhit, Bijnor, and Shahjahanpur. The Ganga flowed along its western boundary, while Ramganga traversed it right across. The Sarju or Gogra passed by the north-east corner†. This country was called Katehr, but about the middle of the eighteenth century it came to be known as Rohilkhand owing to its occupation by Rohilla Afghans.

The intolerance of the Rohillas drove away the majority of Hindu peasantry. Their places were taken by swarms of fresh immigrants

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*The same thing is happening today. Tibetan refugees are pouring into India. If they are allowed to settle at one place, no wonder, they may form a solid block like the Rohilla Afghans, and in course of time demand a separate homeland of th eir own.

†*Walter Hamilton*, i, 31, 427.

who settled there as cultivators. Their restless and enterprising nature led them constantly to encroach upon the lands and possessions of their neighbours. Their character is thus described: "They are a courageous hardy race, and one of the few Mohammedan tribes who exercise the profession of agriculture as well as that of arms. Their high spirit and ferocious uncultivated dispositions render them difficult to govern or discipline; and in common with the other Afghan races, they have the reputation of being crafty, treacherous, and sanguinary*".

Ali Muhammad Rohilla's rise to power

The first settlers of the Rohilla Afghans were two brothers named Shah Alam and Husain Khan. Shah Alam's son was Daud Khan, who gained some distinction in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The real founder of the Rohilla power was Ali Muhammad, from whom sprang the house of the Nawabs of Rampur. Originally a Hindu Jat, he was taken prisoner when a young boy of eight years by Daud, in one of his plundering expeditions about 1715 A.D. at the village of Bankauli in the parganah of Chumahla. He was converted to Islam and adopted by Daud. On his death in 1721, Ali Muhammad took possession of Daud's jagir at Beoli. He joined Azmatullah Khan, the Mughal *faujdar* of Moradabad, who gave his daughter in marriage to Ali Muhammad. With the connivance of his father-in-law, he dispossessed local *zamindars*, seized Aonla†, where he established his headquarters, and carved out for himself an independent principality in the present Bareilly district. Fearing retaliation by the Emperor, he won over Qamr-ud-din Khan, and was confirmed in the lands he possessed. In the battle of Jansath, 37 kilometres north of Meerut, he fought under imperial banners, and by way of reward, received the title of Nawab. His munificence and fame drew many Afghans of repute such as Rahmat Khan and Dunde Khan to his service. During Nadir's invasion he gained immense booty and large territory‡.

In 1741 he killed Raja Harnand Arora, the Mughal Governor of Moradabad, and looted his vast property. He occupied Moradabad, Badaun, Hardoi, Sambhal, Amroha and Shahjahanpur. The

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**Ibid*, 428.

†A village south-west of Bareilly city.

‡*Maasir-ul-umara*, ii, 841-3; *Shakir*, 31; *Siyar*, ii, 92; iii, 9-11; *Calcutta Review*, 1875, vol. Lxi, 202-4; *Sarkar*, i, 27-9.

Delhi Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan not only confirmed him in these districts, but also married his eldest son to Ali Muhammad's daughter. In 1743 he made the Raja of Kumaon his tributary and annexed the districts of Pilibhit and Bijnor*.

The Rohilla Army

On account of Nadir Shah's persecution of the Afghans, thousands of them were fleeing from Afghanistan into India mostly to Rohilkhand. In consequence Ali Muhammad's army in 1742 numbered about forty thousand strong. These people were individually brave and hardy and collectively strong and dreadful owing to their racial unity and well organized military system. Anandram Mukhlis of Lahore, private secretary to Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan, was present in a campaign against Ali Muhammad in 1745. He recorded in his diary: "Every soldier in his army, whether horse or foot, carries a musket; every commander of ten or a hundred infantry has his own small banner of parti-coloured cloth, and these are carried at the head of the cavalcade in marching, so that it looks as if a flower garden is travelling with them†". Sir Jadunath Sarkar draws a remarkable pen-picture of the Rohilla army: "They were cool, accurate shots, expert in taking every advantage of the ground, clever in executing night attacks and ambuscades, extremely mobile on foot, and yet capable of acting in concert and of controlling their fire at the direction of leaders. Their well-regulated volleys, delivered at the right moment, had an electric effect in shaking their enemies nerves and deciding battles by one stroke. The Afghan clan-system turned their manhood into naturally disciplined war-bands, acting in cohesion and in submission to a single higher command, without any thought of self. No mercenary or conscript army could match such fighters, as Macaulay has illustrated in the parallel case of the Scottish Highlanders. Their fire-control, disciplined ardour of fight, and active working of the individual soldier's intelligence were unrivalled in India in that age no less than now‡."

In their fights they observed no moral code, and often displayed cruelty, oppression, and faithlessness. While besieging the fort of Allahabad in 1751, the Afghan soldiers of Ahmad Khan Bangash surrounded the unprotected city, massacred the unoffending people,

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Sarkar, i, 29.
†*Anandram*, 261; *Sarkar*, i, 30.
‡*Sarkar*, i, 30-31.

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plundered their houses and reduced 4,000 women of high families into slavery*. The same thing was done by Najib-ud-daulah at Mathura and Brindaban in 1757.

Ali Muhammad appointed Governor of Sarhind, 1745

Emperor Muhammad Shah was greatly alarmed at the rapid rise of Ali Muhammad. He personally led an expedition against him from February to May 1745. Ali Muhammad fought well, and had the better of the imperial forces. Eventually he had to make peace with the Emperor. He appeared before him with both of his hands bound with a silken handkerchief. He offered a *nazar* of 1001 gold coins. He was taken as a prisoner to Delhi together with his two sons Faizullah Khan and Abdullah Khan. Ali Muhammad's followers about 7,000 strong headed by Rahmat Khan came to Delhi, and made a display of force . The Emperor was alarmed. On the recommendation of Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan, he was given the rank of 4-*hazari* and was appointed Governor of Sarhind. His two sons were detained at the court as hostages. Towards the close of 1747, Ahmad Shah Durrani invaded India. A huge imperial army under Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan marched to oppose him. Ali Muhammad's two sons were also taken by the Wazir with him. On the approach of the Durrani and the Wazir towards Sarhind, Ali Muhammad deserted his post, and quietly slipped away to Rohilkhand . At this time Ali Muhammad's sons who were in the fort of Sarhind fell into the hands of Ahmad Shah Durrani who took them to Qandhar†.

Ali Muhammad recovers Rohilkhand, 1748

On Ali Muhammad's appointment at Sarhind, new Mughal officers were posted in Rohilkhand. This change threw the whole country into confusion and disorder, as numerous Afghan headmen in villages declined to submit. Sayyid Ghulam Husain who at this time was living in Bareilly wrote: "Thousands of Afghans were living there, and having struck their roots, had become owners of the land and made it impossible for anybody else to govern that tract‡." On his return Ali Muhammad expelled all the Mughal

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**Siyar*, iii, 34; *Sarkar*, i, 32, f.n.

† *Charles Hamilton*, 64-70; *Siyar*, iii, 20; *Sarkar*, i, 36.

‡ *Siyar*, iii, 20; *Sarkar*, i, 36; *Charles Hamilton*, 83.

officials and *jagirdars* in a month's time and established his own independent rule.

Division of Ali Muhammad's dominions, 1751

Ali Muhammad's right hand man was Rahmat Khan, who had earlier migrated to India from Afghanistan. He possessed keen intelligence, high administrative ability, great military capacity, as well as conciliatory and compromising nature.

A little before his death, Ali Muhammad had made suitable arrangements for his dominions. Until the return of his two eldest sons, Faizullah and Abdullah then in Qandhar with Ahmad Shah Durrani, his third son Sadullah was to succeed him. Sadullah and his three younger brothers being minors were to be properly looked after by Rahmat Khan whom he gave the title of Hafiz or protector. Rahmat Khan was also to serve as regent. Dunde Khan was appointed commander-in-chief. Sardar Khan was to act as Bakhshi or the paymaster. Fateh Khan was nominated Khan-e-saman or steward.

Ali Muhammad Khan died on 15 September 1748.* The settlement made by him continued for a couple of years. The daughetrs of all the above-mentioned chiefs were married to the sons of Ali Muhammad. Hence in 1751 they divided the vast territory and property among themselves in the name of their sons-in-law whom they assigned only a few villages for their subsistence.†

The Afghan Colony of Farrukhabad

Muhammad Khan Bangash was the founder of the house of Farrukhabad. His father, a Kaghazai Afghan of Bangash, a place in the eastern part of Afghanistan in the Kurram-Kohat valley,‡ came to seek service as a soldier during the early reign of Aurangzeb. Thus it was in India that Muhammad Khan was born about 1665

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*Charles Hamilton in his book "*Rohilla Afgans* on p. 93 says that Ali Muhammad died on "4th of the second Jemmad, in the 1160th year of the Higera" [3 June 1747] which is obviously wrong.

†*Gulistan-e-Rahmat*, 13-20; 28, 45; *Siyar*, *iii*, 27; *Bareilly District Gazetteer*, 661; *Charles Hamilton*, 90.

‡The territory occupied by the Bangash tribe is divided into two parts, the upper Bangash and the lower Bangash. The people of the upper region are Shias, and those of the lower parts are Sunnis. The proportion of the total population between Shias and Sunnis was approximately three to one. Hodiwala, *Indo-Muslim History*, 637; Ibbetson, *North-West Frontier Tribes*, i, 574-5.

A.D. in the village of Mau—Rashidabad now called Qaimganj. When twenty years old, he took up service under a Hindu chief. His capacity for leadership attracted a large number of young men from his original homeland. In 1713 he fought in the civil war on the side of Farrukh Siyar, and won the title of Nawab. In 1714 he founded a town in the Ganga Doab and called it after the name of his patron, Farrukhabad. He rose to be the viceroy of the provinces of Malwa and Allahabad.

He was a great soldier and good administrator. Though he had hoarded immense riches, yet he led a plain and simple life. Only reed mats served him as carpets and coarse *khaddar* cloth as his robes. He had 2, 600 women in his harem. He died in 1743, and was succeeded by his eldest son Qaim Khan.*

The Marathas came into clash with the Bangash Afghans as well as with the Rohillas, an account of which is given in the following pages at appropriate places.

AVADH

S'aadat Khan

The founder of the dynasty of Avadh was Mir Muhammad *Amin*, a Shia from Iran. Having served at a few places, he was appointed *faujdar* of Hindaun-Biyanah in the province of Agra in 1719. He subdued the Jats and Rajputs of this district, and won the rank of 1,500. He supported Muhammad Shah against the Sayyid brothers, and was promoted to the rank of 5,000 Zat and 3,000 Sowars with the title of S'aadat Khan Bahadur. He was nominated Governor of Agra and received the rank of 6,000 Zat and 5,000 Sowars accompanied by the title of Bahadur Jang and the highest honour of *Mahi Maratib*. In 1722 he got the viceroyalty of Avadh where he established himself permanently. Later on the title of Burhan-ul-mulk was conferred upon him. He fought against Nadir Shah at Karnal at the head of an army of 30,000 horse and a strong park of artillery. He died at Delhi on 19 March 1739.

Safdar Jang

S'aadat Khan had no son. He was succeeded by his sister's son Mirza Muhammad Muqim. He was born in 1708 and came from Iran to India in 1723. He was married to the eldest daughter

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*Irvine, *Farrukhabad Gazetteer*, 157; *Sarkar*, i, 26-7.

of S'aadat Khan. He served him as a deputy Governor. Emperor Muhammad Shah conferred upon him the title of Abul Mansur Khan. On S'aadat Khan's death he was confirmed in the viceroyalty of Avadh with the title of Safdar Jang. In 1743 he was appointed *Mir-e-Atish* (Superintendent of Imperial Artillery) in addition to his charge of Avadh . In 1744 Kashmir province was also given to him, but he administered it through his cousin Sher Jang.

Appointed Wazir of the Mughal Empire, 1748

Safdar Jang had fought against Ahmad Shah Durrani in March 1748 at Manupur. After the last Mughal victory over the invader, Safdar Jang was appointed Wazir, and was formally installed in that high office in June 1748. He formed grand plans to save the Mughal Empire from its rapid decay and dissolution. He clearly foresaw that the empire stood in imminent danger from the north-west. He wanted to fortify the frontier posts with Maratha assistance if necessary so that Ahmad Shah Durrani might be checked on the borders of India. He also rightly realized that the Afghan colonies in Rohilkhand were the Durrani's outposts, and therefore they should also be crushed. After these achievements his plans were to set the Rajputs and Jats against Marathas and push them beyond the Narbada. Lastly the Jats were to be crushed in collusion with the Rajputs who were then to be employed in Mughal service as during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Thus he aimed to recover the whole of northern India for the Mughal Empire.

But from the outset he was bitterly opposed by the Turani party headed by Intizam-ud-daulah and supported by Queen-mother Udhambai and her paramour Javid Khan. The last two grasped all the power in their own hands, and foiled every attempt of the Wazir to gain any authority in the state. They were also opposed to his policy. They preferred the Durrani to the Marathas, and were not opposed to Afghan colonies.

Campaign against Rohillas, 1751-2

The rivalry of the Turani party did not deter Safdar Jang from executing a part of his plans. First of all he turned his attention against Rohillas. As all the resources of the empire were not available to him on account of the opposition at court, he enlisted support of the Marathas and Jats. Fighting began on 20 March

1751 near Farrukhabad and continued for about a month on both sides of the river Ganga. Hostilities were suspended for about five months in view of the intensity of heat and the approaching rainy season*.

In the beginning of cold weather, 1751, the Marathas got ready to open the campaign. Safdar Jang also joined them. The Bangash Afghans and Rohillas were united in common defence. After a number of engagements the Afghans were driven away to the hills. The Marathas pursued them. In winter from November 1751 to March 1752 the Rohillas held out as they were getting regular supplies from the Raja of Kumaon and Garhwal. But a virulent fever swept away the Rohillas and Marathas alike in large numbers. One day while fighting in the forest Malharrao's only son Khanderao was captured by the men of Ahmad Khan Bangash. This chief displayed great magnanimity in safely restoring him to his father. Thereafter Malhar told Safdar Jang that he would not fight against the Bangash Nawab.

About this time Ahmad Shah Durrani had invaded the Panjab, and Lahore fell to him in the beginning of March 1752. Emperor Ahmad Shah urgently summoned Safdar Jang to Delhi to save the capital from the Durrani sack . The Wazir made peace with the Rohillas early in April 1752. Ahmad Khan Bangash agreed to pay the Marathas all the money Safdar Jang owed them. The Bangash Nawab surrendered to the Marathas in lieu of these dues half of his dominions including Kanauj and Akbarpur Shah. Govindpant Bundele was appointed to manage these estates†.

Safdar Jang's alliance with Marathas breaks down, 1752

As desired by Emperor Ahmad Shah, Safdar Jang entered into a subsidiary defensive alliance with Marathas on 12 April 1752, but later on the Emperor did not approve of this pact‡. Hitherto Maratha relations with Safdar Jang remained cordial; but shortly afterwards a breach took place between them. A civil war had broken out between Safdar Jang on the one hand and Emperor, his mother, Intizam-ud-daulah and Imad-ul-mulk on the other. On this occasion there was a regular hunt for allies. The Emperor

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*For details of this campaign, vide supra, 18-9

†*Bayan*, 265; *Gulistan-e-Rahmat*, 43; *Siyar*, iii, 37; *Sarkar*, i, 230-1.

‡For details refer to supra, 19.

and Imad by offering higher rewards and greater temptations weaned away the Marathas from the side of Safdar Jang. In this war Safdar Jang was worsted. He retired to Lucknow in November 1753.

Shuja-ud-daulah becomes Nawab of Avadh, 1754

Mirza Jalal-ud-din Haidar, known as Shuja-ud-daulah, was born on 19 January 1732. He was the only son of Safdar Jang. When Safdar Jang was formally appointed Wazir on 19 June 1748, his son was given the title of Shuja-ud-daulah, and was appointed *Mir-e-Atish*, head of the imperial artillery, the post held by his father. In 1750, when Safdar Jang went out on a campaign against the Nawab of Farrukhabad, he acted as deputy-Wazir. At this time rumours spread that the Wazir had been killed in the fight. Javid Khan tried to dismiss him from his posts and seize his property. Shuja-ud-daulah frustrated all the mean designs of his opponents. On the murder of Javid Khan, Shuja-ud-daulah was appointed Superintendent of the *Ghuslkhanah* a post usually conferred upon a high noble enjoying the best confidence of the Emperor. In November 1753 he retired together with his father to Avadh where he served as deputy viceroy. After Safdar Jang's death on 5 October 1754 he became the Viceroy of Avadh and Allahabad. He was confirmed in this office by the new Emperor Alamgir II.

Banaras Temple demolished, 1755

In the early part of Shuja-ud-daulah's reign the demon of Muslim fanaticism began to raise its head. The Muslim officers of Banaras imitating the example of Aurangzeb pulled down the holy temple of Visheshwar Mahadev on 23 September 1755. The Hindus felt deeply offended, and following their traditional manner of passive resistance brought their business activities to a close. The religious guide of Peshwa Balajirao, the head of the famous Dikshit family of Patankar, who resided in the sacred city resorted to hunger strike*.

Maratha Objectives in Avadh

The Marathas felt upset at this incident. They had been trying for many years past to gain possession of the sacred places of

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**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 16–10–1755; Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-daulah*, i, 30.

pilgrimage situated in the Nawab's dominions such as Kashi, Prayag and Ayodhya mainly to save them from cow-slaughter and occasional Muslim fanaticism against pilgrims and temples. Safdar Jang had not yielded to this demand as he did not like a state within a state.

The Marathas were intent on maintaining friendly relations with the Nawabs of Avadh for other considerations also. The Marathas held certain districts in the Ganga Doab. This territory was coveted by Ahmad Khan Bangash and Najib-ud-daulah. To retain their hold on this region they required the Nawab's good-will and co-operation. They were also anxious to conquer Bihar and Bengal with the assistance of the viceroy of Avadh.

Two Princes march on Avadh, March-April 1757

Imad-ul-mulk, the Delhi Wazir, was hostile to Shuja-ud-daulah. He persuaded Emperor Alamgir Sani to recover the rich provinces of Avadh, Allahabad, Bihar and Bengal for the Mughal Empire with the support of the Durrani while he was in India. Ahmad Shah Durrani approved of this scheme. The Emperor bestowed Avadh and Allahabad on his nephew and son-in-law, Mirza Baba, and Bihar and Bengal on his son Hidayat Bakhsh. The beggarly princes with little money and shabby troops accompanied by Imad waited on Ahmad Shah Durrani near Mathura on 19 March 1757. The Shah furnished the Princes with his own letters of confirmation and a sum of Rs. 10,000 to each. An Afghan contingent of 3,600 men under Jangbaz Khan was to accompany them. Imad was to serve as their guardian. Letters were issued to the Bangash and Rohilla Afghans to join them. Najib-ud-daulah's brother Sultan Khan and son Zabitah Khan united with them on the way.

The Princes reached Agra on 23 March 1757, crossed the Jamuna on 25 March, were at Firozabad on 28 March and at Mainpuri on 31 March 1757. Ahmad Khan Bangash joined them on 4 April. He took Mirza Baba to Qadirganj where he stayed up to 20 April. Hidayat Bakhsh went to Etawah from where the Maratha collector fled away. Rohillas under Hafiz Rahmat Khan lay encamped on the bank of the Ganga opposite Qadirganj. Imad joined the Rohillas on 30 April and the Princes on 1 May 1757*.

**SPD*, xxi, 100, 103, 114, 122, 123, 126, 135, 138; xxvi,181; xxvii, 146, 181, 182; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 106b, 109a, 117b—118b, 121a—124a, 127b; *Gulistan-e-Rahmat*, 52-4; Samin, *Indian Antiquary*, 1907, pp. 64-9.

Maratha intervention averts conflict, June 1757

As a counterpoise against this menace Shuja-ud-daulah sought Maratha assistance. At this time Maratha army under Raghunathrao lay encamped at Jaipur. Shuja-ud-daulah sent his confidential secretary Bhawanidas to settle terms for alliance. Ragho Lakshman, the Maratha agent, visited Lucknow, and he reported that the Nawab was keen on forming a treaty with definite and clear terms. The Marathas demanded the cession of the holy places of Ayodhya, Prayag and Kashi in addition to a large sum of money. The negotiations lasted for two months, and did not yield any useful result. Thus the Marathas lost a golden chance on account of their rigidity.

Raghunathrao, however, despatched a force of about 25,000 under Sakharam Bapu to make a display of force, but not to fight until Shuja-ud-daulah accepted the terms of the treaty. Before crossing the Jamuna near Agra early in June 1757, Sakharam Bapu divided his army into three parts, each to proceed in a different direction. One division under Antaji Mankeshwar advanced to Delhi to put pressure upon the Emperor to order for cessation of hostilities. The second under Trimbakrao Mukand marched towards Imad-ul-mulk to persuade him to settle terms. The third led by Sakharam Bapu, Gangadhar Tatya and Gopalrao Ganesh went straight to Shuja-ud-daulah.

Meanwhile Shuja-ud-daulah, after having made necessary preparations left Lucknow to oppose the imperial forces. He encamped near Sandi on the river Garra, while the imperialists took up their position about twenty-two kilometres to the north-west. Here Shuja-ud-daulah waited for Maratha troops and pressed Ragho Lakshman to urge the Maratha commanders to advance by forced marches.

Under advice of Antaji Mankeshwar, the Emperor wrote to Imad-ul-mulk to make peace, and also informed Shuja-ud-daulah about it. The presence of the other two Maratha divisions also produced a soothing effect on the Wazir. Shuja-ud-daulah agreed to pay 15 lakhs as a tribute in instalments. The first instalment of five lakhs was to be paid immediately. Half of this amount was to go to Jangbaz Khan. The remaining $2\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs were to be distributed equally amongst the two Princes, Imad, Ahmad Khan Bangash, and Yahiya Khan commander of the Princes troops. Shuja-ud-daulah paid only one lakh which was taken away by

Jangbaz Khan. For the balance of 4 lakhs, Sadullah Khan, son of Ali Muhammad, stood surety. Jangbaz Khan went to Bareilly and extorted 1½ lakhs from Sadullah's diwan Manrai, and then he returned to Afghanistan. Nobody else got even a copper from Shuja-ud-daulah. All the combatants broke up their camps in the last week of June 1757.*

Marathas avoid alliance with Shuja, 1757

After the Sandi campaign, Shuja-ud-daulah, having successfully bluffed both his friends and foes, returned to Lucknow. The Maratha agent was still at his court, though Shuja-ud-daulah found no need for Maratha alliance. The Rohillas were also anxious to form a defensive alliance with the Nawab in the face of danger from Marathas. The pact of friendship between the Marathas and Imad-ul-mulk was especially galling to them. Hafiz Rahmat Khan and other chiefs made a definite offer to Shuja-ud-daulah to defend their territories in common. As the Marathas were opposed to any regional alliance against them, and Shuja-ud-daulah could not place full reliance upon Rohillas, he rejected the proposal.

The Maratha diplomat, Raghav Lakshman, was joined at Lucknow by the Maratha commander Gopalrao Ganesh who persisted for a treaty of amity and friendship. The main Maratha emphasis was on the cession of the holy places. Shuja-ud-daulah issued certificates in July 1757 investing the control of the sacred cities of Kashi and Ayodhya in the Peshwa. Having achieved this object though only on paper Raghunathrao felt elated, and did not see any need for a regular treaty of friendship. He instructed his agents to postpone negotiations. In this way the Marathas lost the final chance of an alliance with the strongest Muslim prince in northern India. Little did they know that this dilomatic lapse would cost them very heavily in three years to come.†

Maratha Plan of Alliance falls through, 1759

On the abrupt breaking off the negotiations in July 1757, Shuja-ud-daulah desisted from surrendering the two holy cities. Two years passed by without any further progress in this matter.

**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 122b—123b, 127b; *SPD*, xxi, 127, 130, 132; *Indian Antiquary*, 1907, p. 69; *Sarkar*, ii, 133-6; *Srivastava, Shuja-ud-daulah*, i, 35-50.

†*SPD*, ii, 104; xxi, 124, 134; xxvii, 191, 202, 203; Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-daulah*, i, 50-3.

The Peshwa pressed Dattaji Sindhia to recover the two places of pilgrimage together with Prayag. He suggested to him to pursue rigorously anyone of the five courses. Firstly, Shuja-ud-daulah should be urged to make good his written promise. Secondly, if he puts off the matter as usual, he should be assured of the office of the prime minister of Delhi, for an additional tribute of 50 lakhs of rupees. Thirdly, in case he was not prepared to pay so much, he could be offered the post of Mir Bakhshi for a lesser sum. Fourthly, provided he rejected all the above-mentioned proposals, his active co-operation should be secured for the conquest of Bihar and Bengal, offering him half of the conquered territories. Finally, if he rejected all these terms, the city of Allahabad should be forcibly seized.

Dattaji Sindhia decided to subdue Najib-ud-daulah before taking up the matter with Shuja-ud-daulah, and this decision proved the ruin of the Marathas in northern India.*

**SPD*, xxi, 143, 167; Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-daulah*, i, 75-6.

CHAPTER VI

NADIR SHAH AND AHMAD SHAH DURRANI

Nadir Shah's rise to power

Nadir Shah was born in a poor Turkoman family of Khorasan in 1688. He passed his boyhood in extreme poverty and privation. To keep body and soul together he turned a robber. His genius for leadership and bold exploits won him many companions, and he soon came to command a large band of hardy and intrepid followers.

Iran was about this time in the throes of decay and disintegration. The Afghans seized Khorasan, Qandhar and parts of Iran. While the Afghans came from the east, the Russians invaded Iran from the north and the Turks from the west.

Nadir was fired with national pride and unbounded ambition. He marched at the head of his band, defeated the Afghan ruler of Khorasan, recovered Qandhar, and shortly afterwards cleared them out of Iran. He restored the kingdom to Shah Tahmasp who, out of gratitude, granted to Nadir half of his dominions with a richly jewelled crown and the right of coining money.

While Nadir was away to the north and west to drive the invaders, Shah Tahmasp was again defeated by the Afghans who were making frantic attempts to regain power. Shah Tahmasp was deposed in 1732, and the people with one voice urged Nadir to succeed him. Nadir declined to sit on the throne, and proclaimed Abbas, an eight-month old son of Tahmasp as Abbas III, himself acting as regent. The baby-king died in 1736, and Nadir became sovereign under the title of Shahanshah Nadir Shah*.

Invasion of India, 1738-9

Having driven out the Russians, the Turks, and after recovering Balkh and Herat from Afghans, Nadir Shah in May 1738 issued out to punish the Ghilzai Afghans of Qandhar for their aggression

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* *Jahankusha*, 1-222; *Bayan*, 2-21; *Anandram*, 34; *Irvine*, ii, 317-20.

against Iran. He captured this place, and the Afghans fled into the Mughal province of Kabul. Nadir Shah in vain made repeated requests to the Governor of Kabul and the Emperor of Delhi to drive back the fleeing Afghans. He entered the Mughal dominions in pusuit of his enemies. Ghazni and Kabul easily capitulated. Then he decided upon an Indian invasion. He entered Peshawar in November 1738, crossed the Indus in December, defeated the Governor of Lahore in January 1739, and charged a fine of 20 lakhs from him. Nadir Shah reached Sarhind on 5 February, Ambala on 7 February and Shahabad 58 kilometres north of Karnal on 8 February 1739.

Muhammad Shah had come to know of Nadir Shah's intention to invade India when he was at Kabul. The Emperor ordered his generals to oppose the invader. They encamped outside Delhi, and wasted full one month in a mere display of their forces. Then they marched, but with such slowness as to cover a distance of 125 kilometres between Delhi and Karnal in two months. There they entrenched themselves. Nadir Shah routed them on 13 February 1739 in three hours' time, slaying about 20,000 Indian soldiers. He advanced upon Delhi where he massacred another 20,000 innocent people. He plundered princes and people alike, acquiring an immense booty amounting to 70 or 80 krors. The famous Peacock Throne and the Koh-e-noor diamond were also taken away. Nadir Shah married his son Nasrullah Mirza to a royal princess. He annexed trans-Indus territory consisting of Afghanistan, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province, Sind, and the four cis-Indus districts of Gujrat, Aurangabad, Pasrur and Sialkot known as Chahar Mahal*.

Effects of the Invasion on Marathas

The great Maratha historian G.S. Sardesai is of the opinion that the Mughal courtiers invited Nadir Shah to suppress the Maratha power with his assistance. He writes: "These nobles all severally detested the Marathas and possibly conceived the idea of putting them down with the welcome aid of Nadir Shah when he would arrive. There was a widespread belief that the implacable invader undertook the invasion with the sole object of saving the Mughal power from the aggressive Marathas"†.

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* *Jahankusha*, 222-47; *Bayan*, 23; *Siyar*, ii, 93-5; *Irvine*, ii, 321-2.

† *New History of the Marathas*, ii, 163-4.

On the approach of Nadir Shah towards Delhi, Baburao Malhar, the Maratha representative at the Mughal court, fled in panic to Jaipur*. Anandrao Summant was with Nizam-ul-mulk in the capital to note the development of events, and communicate them to the Peshwa. Nadir Shah asked Nizam: "It is surprising that while there are nobles like you on the Emperor's side, the naked Marathas can march up to the walls of Dihli and take ransom from him" ! The Nizam submitted : "Since new nobles rose to influence, His Majesty did whatever he liked, my advice was not acceptable to him. Therefore, in helplessness I left him and retired to the Dakhin†".

Nadir Shah's invasion took Peshwa Bajirao with surprise and alarm. He feared Nadir Shah's occupying Delhi permanently and setting himself up as the sovereign of India in place of the Mughal Emperors. This would mean the end of the Maratha dream of establishing their rule all over India. His brother Chimnaji was waging a war with the Portuguese at Bassein. He instructed him to make peace and bring his troops to be kept ready for an emergency and consolidate their position against the Irani menace. He also started planning to form a Maratha—Rajput coalition against the invader, and established his headquarters at Burhanpur. But Bajirao was not prepared to march farther north without adequate forces. Bassein fell on 12 May 1739. By this time Nadir Shah had left Delhi, and was on his return journey through the Panjab. The Peshwa thereupon heaved a sigh of relief and returned to Poona with an easy mind‡.

There was a rumour that on the departure of Nadir Shah, when only a wreck of the Mughal Empire would remain the Marathas might establish a Hindu monarchy at the imperial capital. Maharajah Shahu clarified this point by issuing clear instructions to the Peshwa through Purandare on 31 May 1739: "It should be our duty to resuscitate the falling Mughal Empire; that the Chhatrapati, as you are already aware, does not aspire to secure the imperial position for himself; that he considers it a higher merit to renovate an old dilapidated edifice than to build a new one. If we attempt the other course (of aggression), it would involve us in enmity with all our neighbours, with the consequence that we should be exposed

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**Ibid*, 165; Irvine, ii, 360; Rajwade, vi, 131.

†Irvine, ii, 353.

‡*SPD*, xv, 72, 75, 80; *Dighe*, 152-3; Lockhart, 150.

to unnecessary dangers and court a crop of trouble all round. Hence the wisest course for us under the circumstances would be to wholeheartedly support the present regime; secure only the administrative management for ourselves as the Amir-ul-Umra of the State: in that capacity we should collect the revenues of the country, out of which we should recover our expenses for the troops and pay the balance into the imperial treasury. This is the general policy I have been asked by His Highness to impress on you for your guidance."*

Ahmad Abdali in the service of Nadir Shah, 1732-47

The scars of Nadir Shah's invasion on the Mughal Empire were still prominently visible, when another invader appeared on the scene. He inflicted such deep wounds that they crippled the empire for good. It was Nadir's disciple Ahmad Shah Abdali. Ahmad belonged to the Sadozai clan of Abdali tribe of Afghans who lived in the province of Herat. His father Zaman Khan had migrated to Multan where Ahmad was born about 1722 A.D. As a revolution was taking place in his homeland, Zaman Khan returned to Herat to participate in the war of independence. Nadir inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Afghans. On Nadir's retirement they revolted again. Nadir subjugated the Abdalis in 1732, and by way of punishment uprooted them from Heart and settled them in Qandhar province which became their future permanent home.†

On this occasion Nadir took many captives, among whom were the two brothers, Zulfiqar and Ahmad. Nadir Shah was struck by Ahmad's intelligence and manly bearing. He enlisted him among his personal troops. Ahmad's valour and capacity for leadership soon won him rapid promotions. He was appointed head of the Abdali contingent numbering about 3,000. He accompanied Nadir Shah in all his campaigns and gained valuable experience in military and diplomatic affairs. Nadir Shah often remarked in open court: "I have not found in Iran, Turan or Hind any man equal to Ahmad Abdali in capacity and character".‡

The author of Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi says that Ahmad Abdali was present in India during Nadir Shah's invasion; Nizam-ul-mulk Asaf Jah, founder of the Haidarabad house in the Deccan, was

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**Sardesai*, ii, 168-9; *Kincaid*, ii, 236; *Satara Historical Society*, ii, 268.

†*Husain Shahi*, 9-13; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 4-7; *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 61-118; *Ahmad Shah Baba-e-Afghan*, 35.

‡*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*,4; *Husain Shahi*, 14; *Tarikh-e-Ali*, 121; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 6; *Gulistan-e-Rahmat*, 145; *Ahmad Shah Baba-e-Afghan*, 79.

credited with the power of reading a man's future from his face. He happened to see Ahmad Abdali sitting at the Jali gate of the Diwan-e-'Am in Red Fort. He told him that he was destined to become a king. This prediction was reported to Nadir Shah. The invader having faith in what was predicted by the Nizam, called Ahmad Abdali before him, and clipped his ears, saying, "After me the kingship will pass on to you; then you must not forget me, and must treat my family well. When you become a king, this will remind you of me*".

Ahmad elected Leader of the Afghans, June 1747

Nadir Shah's Qizalbash conspirators murdered their master on the night of 9 June 1747. Nadir's faithful Afghan troops, 4,000 strong under command of Ahmad Abdali were the next victim of Iranis to be attacked the following day. An Afghan queen of Nadir Shah secretly conveyed the news of Nadir's assassination to Ahmad, and he got on the alert. Early next morning Ahmad rushed into Nadir's tent, removed the Emperor's seal from his finger and the Koh-e-noor diamond from his arm, seized other valuable property, and dragged away as wife the Mughal princess, Iffat-un-nisa, the great granddaughter of Aurangzeb whom Nadir Shah had married to his son Nasrullah in 1739. Finding himself in the midst of a hostile population in a foreign land, he decided to return to Afghanistan†.

At the third stage on their return journey, the Afghan chiefs held a council and resolved: "On the long journey before us we need a man whose commands all shall obey. It would be difficult, nay impossible, for us to reach Qandhar with the entire body of our women, children and servants, in the face of hostile Iranis, unless we have a supreme chief. We must obey such a leader, whatever happens". The question of selecting a suitable chief now remained to be settled. A number of meetings were held to come to a decision. Eventually Ahmad's religious guide, Muhammad Sabir Shah‡,

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*According to Ferrier, *History of the Afghans*, 93, only one of his ears was cut off. cf. *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 97; *Maasir-ul-umra*, ii, 791; *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 121; *Husain Shahi*, 11-2; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 9-10; *Sarkar*, i, 201.

†*Jahankusha*, 461; *Bayan*, 125-6; *Husain Shahi*, 13, *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 10-11.

‡Muhammad Sabir Shah was the grandson of the famous Ustad Halalkhor, the ferrier of Kabul, who had turned a *faqir* and was greatly revered by Turanis. His father's name was Husain. Their original home was in Lahore, but recently they had migrated to Afghanistan. [*Bayan*, 162-3; *Tarikh-e-Ali*, 123; *Ibrat Miqal*, ii, 55b-56a; *Siyar*, iii, 16; *Husain Shahi*, 17-8; *Mujmil*, 74; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 6.

AHMAD SHAH DURRANI
Courtesy: Dr. Ganda Singh

MARATHAS AND PANIPAT

JAHAN KHAN

Courtesy Dr Gulab Singh

persuaded them to accept Ahmad as their leader*.

Ahmad becomes King, June-July 1747

Sabir Shah had made up his mind to make his disciple the king of Afghans. He continued his persuasive talks with all the Afghan chiefs in the course of the journey. When they reached the tomb of Shaikh Seruk in the village of Nadirabad, 56 kilometres from Qandhar, Sabir Shah collected all the Afghans in the open compound and impressed upon them the necessity of creating an independent kingdom like that of Nadir Shah. He then piled up a small mound of earth, seized Ahmad's hand, and seated him on it saying, "This is your throne". Then strewing some shoots of green grass† on his head, he declared them the aigrette on his crown, and styled him Durrani Padshah, or pearl among kings. Henceforth the Abdalis began to call themselves Durranis‡.

Afghanistan had formed a part of the Indian Mughal Empire from 1526 to 1739 when it became a province of Nadir Shah's Iranian empire. Thus Ahmad Shah was the first Afghan king of independent Afghanistan in modern times. Ahmad Shah claimed for himself the provinces which Nadir Shah had wrested from Muhammad Shah of Delhi as a part of the Durrani kingdom. These included Qandhar, Ghazni, Kabul, Peshawar, Hazara, Kohat, Bannu, Derajat, Sind, Qalat and Chahar Mahal. To complete

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**Mujmil*, 74; *Tarikh-e-Ali*, 122; *Ferrier*, 68-9; *Malleson*, 273-4; *Siyar*, iii, 16; *Bayan*, 163; *Ibrat Miqal*, ii, 56a.

†Ganda Singh in his *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, on p. 27, says that "barley-shoots from an adjoining field," were placed in Ahmads' turban, but it is doubtful whether they could be available at the end of June or in early July.

‡Sabir Shah called Ahmad Shah '*Dur-e-dauran*', the pearl of the age; but Ahmad Shah preferred the modest title of *Dur-e-durran*, the pearl of pearls.

[*Tarikh-e-Afghani*, 17; *Hayat-e-Afghani*, 121, 129.]

The idea of the pearl struck the saint probably from the fact that when Ahmad was a slave of Nadir Shah, he like the rest wore in his ear a gold ring, studded with a pearl. [*Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 6; *Tarikh-e-Ali*, 124.]

The contemporary Anandram Mukhlis of Lahore, private secretary to Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan of Delhi, in his *Tazkirah* refers to a letter written by Ahmad Shah Durrani to Muhammad Husain Afridi dated 15 July 1747 in which the Shah mentions about his having been crowned as king of Afghanistan.

[Ganda Singh, *Ahmad Shah Durrani*, 27.]

Cf. *Husain Shahi*, 13-4; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 11-2; *Mujmil*, 74-5; *Saulat-e-Afghani*, 341-2.

the paraphernalia of royalty and to win over the loyalty of the other Afghan clans, he appointed Shah Vali Khan Bamezai his prime minister under the title of Ashraf-ul-Wuzra, Jahan Khan Popalzai commander-in-chief and Bakhshi (paymaster) and Shah-pasand Khan Amir-e-Lashkari or deputy commander-in-chief. Some other chiefs like Barkhurdar Khan, Nur-ud-din and Abdullah Khan were given other high offices. A council of nine members representing the other tribes was formed to advise the king in administration*.

This regality appeared to Ahmad Shah hollow without money. Luck favoured him even in this difficulty. Muhammad Taqi Khan Akhtabegi Shirazi, nicknamed Kor or blind as he had only one eye, had been sent by Nadir Shah to collect the revenues of his Indian provinces. He was returning with a sum of thirty lakhs of rupees. Just at this time he was passing through Qandhar on his way to Iran. Ahmad Shah seized the treasure and persuadedthe chief to enter his service. This success gave his government a perfectly regular character. He then struck a coin in his own name which bore the following inscription:

> "God, the inscrutable, commanded Ahmad, the king, to stamp silver and gold currency, from the bottom of the sea to the moon".

He also had a seal made in the form of a peacock bearing the following line:

> "By the command of God, the bestower of victory, Ahmad Shah became the pearl of pearls".
>
> The seat of his government was fixed at Qandhar†.

Necessity of Foreign Wars

To consolidate his power, it was essential for Ahmad Shah to wage foreign wars. Afghanistan was a very poor country. Only 1½ per cent of the total area of the country was cultivated‡, and

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**Husain Shahi*, 14; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 6; *Tarikh-e-Ali*, 124.

†*Bayan*, 162; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 97; *Husain Shahi*, 21; *Anandram*, 235; *Imad-us-Saadat* 58b; *Tarikh-e-Salatin-e-Afghanan*, 143-4; *Tarikh-e-Ali*, 124; *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 124; *J.A.S.*, vol. Liv, part i, '*The Coins of Ahmad Shah Abdali*'.

A letter dated April 1761 to which the above seal is affixed is preserved in the Forman Christian College, Lahore.

‡Rand M.C. Nally, *World Guide*, 296.

agriculture furnished "the chief means of livelihood for the population".* The country did not afford sufficient means of subsistence, and foreign adventures either for plunder or for service were a necessity for the Durrani as well as for the Afghans in general. Besides the Afghans were a nation of warriors. "In a country where every man carries his life in his hands naturally every one is a soldier†" All of them were fine horsemen. They bred horses and sold them in India‡. Fighting and killing being a sport and pleasure their energy was to be directed to other lands in order to avoid civil wars at home. The lure of money and greed for gold was so intense in the heart of every Afghan that he could be led in its pursuit even to the farthest corner of the earth§.

Foreign invasions involved a personal factor also. Though Ahmad Shah Durrani was a king, yet the old nobility considered him an upstart. Victories abroad would enhance his prestige, and secure allegiance of the unruly chiefs. In addition the freedom-loving young men would be tamed to submit and obey. The field for exploits was open to him on all sides, but the countries situated to the north, west and south being destitute of riches, he turned his attention to India.

Occupation of Ghazni, Kabul and Peshawar, 1747

Ghazni, Kabul and Peshawar formed part of Afghanistan. Nasir Khan had been the Governor of this province from 1717 to 1739 under the Mughals, and from 1739 to 1747 under Nadir Shah. Ahmad Shah Durrani offered to confirm him in this office if he agreed to pay an annual tribute of five lakhs. Nasir Khan rejected the offer, left his deputy at Kabul, and himself came to Peshawar.

Ahmad Shah invited recruits from all over Afghanistan, and in three months' time after his arrival at Qandhar he collected an army of 40,000 men. He left Qandhar early in October 1747,

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*Pearcy , *Political Geography* (1952 edition), 323.

†Clewell and Thompson, *Lands and People*, (1948 edition), 8.

‡*Ibid:* "The Afghans are primarily a nation of horsemen". cf. *Walter Hamilton*, ii, 541.

§"Their ruling passion is the love of gain, and hoarding a favourite system with all classes, the influence of money being unbounded." [*Walter Hamilton*, ii, 543.]

"Gold in Afghanistan is, more than anywhere else, the god of the human race." [*Ferrier*, 286.]

captured Ghazni and Kabul with little resistance, and advanced towards Peshawar. Abdus Samad Khan Mamanzai of Hashtnagar supported him. Nasir Khan attacked his fort, but he managed to escape. Nasir Khan plundered this place, and killed his family. Abdus Samad guided Afghan vanguard under Jahan Khan through the Khaibar Pass safely. Nasir Khan fled away across the Indus and took his position in the Chach country.* Ahmad Shah ordered Jahan Khan to pursue him. He succeeded in escaping towards Lahore, but his family fell into Jahan Khan's hands. Just to deceive the people of the Panjab that he was a kind-hearted ruler, he set them at liberty. Nasir Khan reached Delhi, and was granted an audience by Emperor Muhammad Shah on 19 December 1747, and received robes of honour, an elephant and one lakh of rupees.†

Fall of Lahore , January 1748

While Ahmad Shah was at Peshawar, he received an invitation from Shahnawaz Khan, the usurper of the Panjab Government, to invade India. The invader warmly welcomed this offer. He left Peshawar by the middle of December 1747, and arrived at Shahdara, opposite Lahore, on 8 January 1748. Meanwhile Shahnawaz Khan had changed his mind under the influence of his maternal uncle, Qamr-ud-din Khan, the grand Wazir of Delhi. Ahmad Shah tried his utmost to regain the young Governor's loyalty, but to no purpose. He crossed the Ravi on 10 January, and encamped in the Shalimar Garden. The battle took place on 11 January. Shahnawaz Khan was defeated and he fled to Delhi. The Durrani plundered the outer parts of Lahore, but spared the city for a ransom of 30 lakhs.‡

The Delhi Army reaches Sarhind, 25 February 1748

The Mughal courtiers had learnt no lesson from their discomfiture by Nadir Shah. His massacre, rapine and outrages were soon forgotten. The Mughal nobility fell into a course of sloth and

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*An extensive plain about 30 kilometres long and 24 kilometres wide situated to the east of the Indus strewn all over with granite boulders and covered with long grass and low bushes. [*Thornton*, i, 145.]

†*Anandram*, 300-2; *Husain Shahi*,22; *Siyar*, iii, 17; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 6; *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 124-5; *Saulat-e-Afghani*, 52; *Ahmad Shah Baba-e-Afghan*, 247-50.

‡The contemporary Waris Shah, the famous author of Hir, then living in Lahore, witnessed the horrors of this campaign. He condemns Shahnawaz Khan and his men, and calls them even more cowardly than women.

[*Sassi Waris Shah* of Abdul Qadir, 12.]

Cf. *Husain Shahi*, 25.

sensuality as before. The news of Ahmad Shah's advance had been daily pouring in the imperial capital for a few months past, but they remained as passive as ever. When they learnt that Lahore had been seized by the invader, the imperial army, consisting of two lakhs of men, but with only 60,000 combatants slowly stirred out of their luxurious abode on 13 January 1748. The nominal command of this army was given to Prince Ahmad Shah, the only son of Emperor Muhammad Shah, but Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan was the supreme head in reality. Under him were two great nobles, Safdar Jang of Avadh and Raja Ishwari Singh of Jaipur. Abdullah Khan and Faizullahkhan the sons of Ali Muhammad Rohilla, who were in Delhi as hostages, were also taken along with this army.

The imperial army arrived at Sirhind on 25 February, when they found that the fort had been deserted by Ali Muhammad Rohilla in order to avoid fighting with his Afghan brethren. The Wazir left his heavy baggage, surplus stores, womenfolk including his own *harem* and Ali Muhammad's two sons in the fort with a garrison of 1,000 horse and foot. All the rest marched to the river Satluj. Instead of marching by the direct road to Ludhiana they advanced to Machhiwara, 35 kilometres above. They committed another blunder in not guarding the Ludhiana road, in not protecting the ford at Ludhiana, and in not maintaining communication with Sarhind.

The Durrani seizes Sarhind, 2 March 1747

Ahmad Shah stayed at Lahore for five weeks, when he struck his own coin. Having entrusted the administration to some of the local chiefs, he left Lahore with 30,000 horsemen on 19 February 1748 and crossed the Satluj at Ludhiana on 1 March. On learning that the Mughal army having left their treasure and heavy baggage were at Machhiwara, he rushed to Sarhind which was occupied on 2 March 1748. He put the garrison to the sword, seized all war material and treasure and reduced the women to slavery.*

The Battle of Manupur, 11 March 1748

Learning of the catastrophe the imperialists became panicky, lest the Shah might advance upon the unprotected capital of the empire. They hurriedly returned on 3 March, and halted near

**Husain Shahi*, 27.

Manupur, 16 kilometres north-west of Sarhind. There they took up an entrenched position. It was a dry and sandy region, and they suffered from scarcity of water. Food also grew scarce because the swift roving bands of Afghans had cut off their supplies. Only notable local chiefs such as Alha Singh of Patiala, Jamal Khan of Malerkotla, Rai Kalha of Jagraon and Adina Beg Khan, Governor of the Jalandhar Doab, came to their rescue by harassing the Afghans. The Durrani dug trenches 8 kilometres from Sarhind towards the imperial camp. He had only one heavy gun and seven pieces of light artillery against several hundred guns of different calibre possessed by the Delhi Army.

On 11 March 1748 the Wazir was to lead the army for a general attack. The imperial forces were arranged in the following order. The advance-guard consisted of Wazir's troops, mostly Turks under Muin-ul-mulk. The right wing containing Irani soldiers and Purabias of Avadh was under Safdar Jang. The centre was commanded by Prince Ahmad at the head of his personal contingents. The left consisting of Rajput troops was under Raja Ishwari Singh of Jaipur. The rear-guard was under Nasir Khan, ex-viceroy of Afghanistan.

Ahmad Shah despatched Muhammad Taqi Khan Shirazi against Muin-ul-mulk. He himself opposed Safdar Jang. The Durrani opened the battle at 8 O'clock in the morning on Friday, 11 March by discharging fire with his light guns. The Mughal commander-in-chief, Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan, had just knelt down in prayer to God before delivering the assault, when a ball from a Durrani gun burst into his tent and hit him on the waist. There were several other men present, but none of them was hurt. Calling his son Muin, the Wazir told him that the news must be kept a dead secret, and that he must suppress his filial sufferings, and should deliver the assault instantly. Having said so he expired. Muin beat the drums and the battle began.

Severe fighting continued on both sides, the heaviest on the side of the Rajputs. They wore yellow clothes, indicating their resolution to win or vanish. The Shah adopted his usual tactics in dealing with such determined fanatics. The Durrani right wing faced the left wing of the imperial army under Ishwari Singh. The Shah divided it into two parts, each consisting of 3,000 men with 200 swivels on camels. One division galloped furiously yelling and shouting. They discharged their matchlocks and guns from close quarters. They kept on moving all the time in one direction giving place to the

second division, and loading their guns as they went. Whirling around they again came to the front and discharged their missiles. In this way every soldier had time to refresh himself and refill his gun. No Indians, the bravest of the brave, Rajputs and Marathas included, with the exception of the Sikhs, could stand against such onslaughts. At each volley hundreds of Rajput saddles became empty. This broke the heart of Ishwari Singh. He was a bitter enemy of the houses of Bundi and Jodhpur. He had joined this battle in order to win the imperial support against his enemies. He suddenly realized that the loss of his men in the Panjab would ruin him in Rajasthan. Throwing to the wind all the Rajput traditions of several hundred years past, he withdrew his men from the field. Without taking permission of the Prince or informing anyone he fled away leaving behind all his heavy baggage and spare horses and camels. Even on the way he continued throwing extra weapons into the wells and burning their luggage to accelerate his speedy return. Such was the shameless conduct of the ruler of Jaipur.

Then Ahmad Shah directed his attention to Muin-ul-mulk and Prince Ahmad. At both these places the contest raged furiously. Muin's skin was grazed, his brother was shot in the foot, Adina Beg was twice wounded, and many officers of note were slain. Meanwhile the right wing under Safdar Jang had defeated the Afghans. Safdar Jang then rushed to the rescue of Muin. Just at this time when the Afghans were hard pressed, their own stores of rockets caught fire. The sparks set fire to the gunpowder of the field artillery, killing 1,000 Afghans on the spot. Ahmad Shah Durrani followed the example of Ishwari Singh, and secretly departed for Afghanistan in the moonlit night leaving Indians masters of the field. He managed to carry away all the treasure and most of the stores and weapons and some Indian prisoners including the two sons of Ali Muhammad Rohilla.

The Mughals took no advantage of their victory, as they stirred from their trenches five days later on 16 March. By this time Durrani had gone far beyond Lahore. The Prince reached Ludhiana on 21 March and allowed his troops some days for rest. On 9 April a letter came from Muhammad Shah, recalling the Prince to Delhi immediately, and appointing Muin-ul-mulk, the Viceroy of the Panjab.*

**Anandram*, 343-77; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 7-20; *Mujmil*, 101-12; *Zafar Namah*, 4b-12A; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*,97-8; *Siyar*, iii, 18-9; *Husain Shahi*, 27-30; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 59a–62a; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 426b—427a; *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 126-7; *Waris Shah*, 12-5; *Ali-ud-din*, 108a—109b. *Gulistan-e-Rahmat*, 37-9; *Tarikh-e-Ali*, 159-60; *Khair-ud-din*, 34-5; *Sarkar*, i, 211-33; *Twarikh Chahar Gulshan*, 148. *Ahmad Shah Baba-e-Afghan*, 200-4.

CHAPTER VII

DURRANI ANNEXATION OF THE PANJAB,

Preparation for the Second Invasion

On his return to Afghanistan Ahmad Shah had to restore peace and order in his newly established kingdom. In his absence his nephew Luqman had revolted at Qandhar. Ahmad Shah put him to death. He then spent a few months in consolidating his position. But the uppermost thought in his mind was another invasion of India*.

There were several reasons for it. He was bent on retrieving his honour, as without a victory he could not assert himself fully in his homeland. The Mughal Emperor had appointed Nasir Khan Viceroy of Afghanistan, and the Durrani had to assert his authority in Ghazni, Kabul and Peshawar. His ruling passion for gold could not be satisfied anywhere else. The political situation in India favoured his designs. The experienced Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan was dead. The Emperor Muhammad Shah followed him to the grave in a month after the battle of Manupur. The new Emperor, Ahmad Shah, was given to sensual pleasures. The new Wazir Safdar Jang, head of the Irani party, was opposed to the rival Turani party, of which Muin-ul-mulk, the Panjab Viceroy, was an important member, and so he would not get any help from Delhi.

Trans-Indus Territory and Chahar Mahal acquired, 1749

The Durrani started from Qandhar in the beginning of cold weather of 1748, and crossed the Indus by the middle of December 1748. Muin-ul-mulk appealed to his master for help, and resolved to oppose the invader until the arrival of reinforcements. Leaving Sayyid 'Evaz Khan and Diwan Lakhpat Rai in charge of the capital, he encamped at Sodhara, 6 kilometres east of Wazirabad on the Chenab. Adina Beg was with him. The invader also reached the opposite bank, and finding his way blocked halted at Kopra. Fire was

**Mujmil,* 113.

exchanged on both sides, but no fighting could take place as the most turbulent river of the Panjab lay between them. Ahmad Shah directed Jahan Khan to ravage the country on the other side of the river.

The Shah sent his ambassador to Muin-ul-mulk calling upon him to surrender. Muin showed his determination to fight. The envoy demanded confirmation of the treaty of 1739 made with Nadir Shah in the name of his master. Muin forwarded this letter to the Delhi Emperor begging reinforcements and prolonged the negotiations. To his surprise, the Mughal Emperor, instead of sending him any help, ceded to the invader all the trans-Indus territories and assigned him the revenues of the Chahar Mahal–Gujrat, Aurangabad, Pasrur and Sialkot.* The total revenue of these districts amounted to 14 lakhs of rupees a year. After deducting the expenses of administration, the balance ranging from 8 to 10 lakhs a year was to be paid to the Durrani. In view of the limitations of his own military resources, Muin concluded negotitions with the Durrani by handing over the royal mandate†.

Third Invasion: Conquest of Panjab and Kashmir, 1751-2

Ahmad Shah retired to Afghanistan via Derajat and Baluchistan, getting submission of the local chiefs on the way. At Qandhar he suppressed a plot aiming at his assassination. The intrigue was hatched by the heads of a few Afghan tribes. All the conspirators were put to death together with ten leading men from each guilty tribe‡.

Herat, the original home of the Abdalis and a province of Afghanistan, was still governed by Iran. Ahmad Shah was determined to recover it. After a long seige he succeeded in conquering it in 1750. Then he remained busy in settling the affairs in Khorasan.¶

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*Gujrat contained 581 villages, Aurangabad 307 villages, Pasrur 632 villages and Sialkot 1, 484 villages. [*District Gazetteers* (1883-4): *Gujra t*,17; *Sialkot*, 15.]

† *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 46-8; *Miskin*, 53; *Bayan*, 174-5; *Zafarnamah*, 20a: *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 98; *Siyar*, iii, 29-30; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 80a; *Tarikh-e-Salatin-e-Afghanan*, 151-3; *Irshad-ul-Mustqim*, 294b; *Ibrat Miqal*, ii, 61b; *Ali-ud-din*, 111a; *Sohan Lal*, i, 129; *Ahmad Shah*, 865; *Elliot*, viii, 114-5; *Sarkar*, i, 417-9.

‡ *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 127-8; *Ferrier*, 73-4; *Malleson*, 280-1; *Ahmad Shah Baba-e-Afghan*, 207-8;

¶ *Mujmil*, 76-81; *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 128; *Ferrier*, 74-5; *Elphinstone*, 287-8; *Malleson*, 281; *Sykes*, 370-2.

As soon as he was free from affairs at home, he thought of India, the land of his dreams and ambitions. A ready pretext, if it was at all required, came handy. The time for receipt of the promised annual tribute of Chahar Mahal had passed without getting anything. The intrepid Ahmad Shah left Qandhar early in September 1751. He was at Kabul on 21 September. He sent in advance his envoy Harun Khan to Lahore demanding remittance of the revenues. Muin told him that no revenues had been collected owing to constant disturbances. Ahmad Shah stayed at Peshawar and from there sent another agent, Sukhjiwanmal pressing for money. Muin paid him nine lakhs of rupees promising to remit the balance on Durrani's immediate withdrawal from Peshawar. Ahmad Shah took the money, and continued his advance. Jahan Khan was two or three marches ahead of the Durrani.

Meanwhile Muin had been making full preparations. He sent his mother, wife and daughter to Jammu. He enlisted as many as 50,000 troops including Sikhs, and possessed 400 camel swivels. Towards the close of November he crossed the Ravi, having left 'Evaz Khan in charge of the Capital. He encamped for some days at Sarai Balkhian 12 kilometres from Lahore. The roving Afghan bodies under Jahan Khan were ravaging the country, and were frequently clashing with Muin's troops. The Shah as usual adopted a clever stratagem. He made a show that he was in his camp, and leaving his tents standing cut into the rear of Muin, crossed the Ravi at the ferry of Ghazipur, and reached Lahore via Niaz Beg. He encamped near the tomb of Shah Balawal about the middle of December 1751. Jahan Khan crossed the Ravi by a northerly ferry. Muin rushed by the direct road, crossed over at Rajghat, and after some fighting entrenched himself under the city walls.

The Durrani besieged the town, and decided to reduce Muin to capitulation by starvation. The siege continued for about two months and a half. The whole country around Lahore within a radius of about 80 kilometres was entirely laid waste. According to eye-witness Miskin "no lamp was lighted in any house for a distance of three marches and an extreme scarcity of grain prevailed in the camps of both the armies"*. Owing to long campaign Muin's trenches became extremely unhealthy and full of foul and poisonous stench. The supply of water in the wells had been exhausted, while no food or

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**Miskin*, 75.

fodder was available in the city. No reinforcements had come from Delhi to the defender of the province during this critical period. Muin left his trenches on 5 March 1752. He was fiercely assailed on all sides. After a severe scuffle on 5 and 6 March Muin lost the day.

Next day Muin-ul-mulk fearlessly went to the Afghan camp attended only by three persons, having put his turban round the neck as a sign of submission. He had taken with him a number of excellent horses, cash and clothes as presents. Shah Vali Khan and Jahan Khan, the highest Afghan nobles, received him and presented him to Ahmad Shah. The Shah had already been impressed with the hero of Manupur, and the son of the late Delhi Wazir, by his bravery and fearlessness. He was now struck with the noble bearing, boldness of address and frankness of manners of this young man of parts. The following conversation took place between them, which displayed Muin's personality in bold colours:

Durrani: Why didn't you submit earlier?
Muin: I had then another master to serve.
Durrani: Why didn't that master come to your help?
Muin: He thought his servant could take care of himself.
Durrani: What would you have done if you had captured me?
Muin: I would have cut off your head and sent it to my master at Delhi.
Durrani: Now that you are at my mercy, what should I do to you?
Muin: If you are a shopkeeper, sell me (for a ransom); if you are a butcher, kill me; but if you are a king, then grant me your grace and pardon.
Durrani: May God bless you! I pardon you.

He embraced him, conferred upon him the title of 'Farzand Khan Bahadur, Rustam-e-Hind', granted him a robe of honour, an aigrette for the crest and the very turban he was wearing, and installed him in the viceroyalty of the Panjab on his behalf.

Lahore and Multan ceded to the Durrani, March-April 1752

Muin begged the Shah to pardon his people who had done him no injury. Ahmad Shah granted his request, released the captives including Abdullah Khan and Faizullah Khan sons of Ali Muhammad Rohilla, and issued orders prohibiting his soldiers from plundering the people. Muin collected whatever amount he could

raise in the city and presented it to the Durrani together with the keys of the fort. Afterwards a treaty was signed by Muin, by the terms of which the provinces of Lahore and Multan were ceded to the Durrani Empire. Ahmad Shah then sent his envoy Qalandar Beg to Delhi for the confirmation of the terms of the treaty. The Emperor granted him audience in the Diwan-e-Khas on 13 April and dismissed him by putting his seal on the treaty, thus losing the most important frontier province of the Mughal Empire.

The Durrani conquers Kashmir, March-April 1752

While his ambassador had gone to Delhi, Ahmad Shah Durrani availing himself of the interval decided on the occupation of Kashmir. He despatched a strong detachment under Abdullah Khan, who with the help of Ranjit Dev of Jammu, made his way to the capital of Kashmir, ousted Abul Qasim the Mughal viceroy, and established the authority of the Durrani. Ahmad Shah appointed Diwan Sukhjiwanmal viceroy of Kashmir and Abdullah Khan his deputy*.

Tribute demanded from Delhi Emperor, February 1753

Ahmad Shah Durrani left Lahore about 21 April 1752. He went to Multan which was placed under Ali Muhammad Khakwani. After settling a dispute at Bahawalpur,† he set out for Qandhar via Sind and Baluchistan.He must have reached his capital not earlier than the end of June 1752. Having found peace and tranquillity at home, he found it difficult to sit still. His passion for a fresh invasion of India, though without any provocation, reigned supreme in his mind. After a stay of about three months at Qandhar he again left for India and reached Jalalabad situated in the middle of Kabul and Peshawar in November 1752. His advance-guard under Jahan Khan marched to the Indus. Muin's agents waited

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**Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 83-5; 91, 93-5, *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 98, 114; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 85a, 122a; *Miskin*, 76, 78, 79; *Husain Shahi*, 32-3; *Delhi Chronicle*, 69, 70, 71; *SPD*, xxi, 53, 55; *Miscellaneous Papers*, Nos. (5) 1271, 1930; (6-7) 1942, 1944; (12) 1954, 1955; (13) 1206; (14) 2284; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 8, 9; *Tarikh-e-Salatin-e-Afghanan*, 154; *Siyar*, iii, 44; *Sohan Lal*, i, 132-5; *Khushwaqt Rai*, 85-8; *Farhat-u-Nazirin* in *Elliot*, viii, 167, 168; *Ahwal-e-Adina Beg*, 54a-b; *Ali-ud-din*, 112a-b; *Browne*, ii, 17; *Shah Yusaf*. 56b *Tarikh-e-Ali*, 213-27; *Ahmad Shah Baba-e-Afghan*, 215-6. *Sarkar*, i, 345-60; *Narayan Kaul*, 183b-184a; Kirparam, *Gulzar-e-Kashmir*, 230-2; *Khair-ud-din*, 37.

†Shahamat Ali, *History of Bahawalpur*, 38-9.

upon the Afghan commander-in-chief at Attock. It appears Muin pleaded with Jahan Khan and through him appealed to the Shah for not undertaking a fresh invasion so soon. The reason given must have been the loss of revenues in the Panjab and loss of faith in the Shah. The Durrani and Jahan Khan did not advance farther.

But it was beneath their dignity to go back home empty-handed. Muin-ul-mulk being his own viceroy could not be pressed for any money. So an ambassador was sent to Delhi demanding from Emperor Ahmad Shah a tribute of 50 lakhs of rupees. In case of no-ncompliance the Durrani threatened to march on the capital. This envoy escorted by 2,000 Afghan horsemen reached Delhi on 5 February 1753. On 6 February 1753 a Maratha force of about 4,000 horsemen took up their position on Kalkaji hillocks. He was granted audience by the Emperor on 13 February 1753. He presented a *nazar* of five gold coins and delivered the Shah's letter. He was granted a robe of honour consisting of three pieces. He was asked to wait for about a week when a reply would be given. The Emperor held consultations with his minister and courtiers. They said: "The Marathas have undertaken to fight the Abdali. You have given them two provinces of Agra and Ajmer, and the Chauth of all the 24 subahs. You have paid them money and placed all authority in their hands. Ask them what should he done now."

Safdar Jang who had made the treaty with the Marathas in April 1752 held out hopes of a campaign against the Afghan invader. He told the Emperor that a Maratha force of 10,000 united with his own army of 30,000 would march to the Panjab to check the Durrani advance. The Afghan envoy was allowed to leave on 22 March 1753 with a part payment of the tribute*.

Fourth Invasion: Annexation of Sarhind, 1756-7

The Panjab Governor Muin-ul-mulk died on 3 November 1753. His only son, a three-year old baby, followed him in May 1754. Muin's widow, well-known as Mughlani Begam, a youthful and energetic lady, seized the power in her own hands in opposition to the Delhi and Lahore Courts. Her only daughter, Umda Begam, was betrothed to Imad-ul-mulk, the grand Wazir, who though

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**SPD*, xxi, 53, 54, 55; xxvii, 68, 77, 83; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 43b, 44b, 45b, 46b, 49a; *Sarkar*, i, 260; *Sardesai*, ii, 367.

vigorous and scheming was one of the most incompetent ministers Delhi had ever seen. He was treacherous to the backbone. He oppressed the Emperor Alamgir II, displeased his great supporter Najib-ud-daulah and deeply offended the Begam. All of these personages wanted to get rid of the Wazir, and invited Ahmad Shah Durrani to invade India.

Najib-ud-daulah deputed his brother Sultan Khan to Qandhar with a letter saying: "In this country I have gathered round myself 25,000 Afghans. I have prepared the other Afghans of Gangapar (trans-Ganga) who number 40,000 to enter your service. You may come here without any suspicion. Imad-ul-mulk has not the strength to oppose you. I am his greatest ally. As I have become obedient to you, there is none other left here (to help him*)".

The Mughlani Begam wrote: "Goods and Cash worth krors of rupees lie buried to my knowledge in the palace of my late father-in-law, besides heaps of gold and silver stored inside the ceilings. A perfect disagreement exists among the Emperor Alamgir II, his Wazir and nobles. If you invade India this time, the Indian empire with all its riches of krors will fall into your hands without incurring any expenditure."†

To realize his heart's sincerest desire there could be no better opportunity. He accepted the invitations. He deputed his envoy Qalandar Beg in advance. He reached Delhi in October, met Wazir Imad-ul-mulk on 29 October 1756, and the Emperor on 23 November. He was given conge on 9 December.‡

Ahmad Shah Durrani left Qandhar towards the end of September 1756, crossed the Indus at Attock on 15 November, and reached Lahore on 20 December. His advance-guard marched via Batala, 38 kilometres north of Amritsar and Adinanagar, 83 kilometres north of Amritsar, ravaging and massacring, and munching sugar-cane all the way. The Durrani advanced by the direct road massacring the people of Nurmahal, a town 19 kilometres from Phillaur. He was at Ludhiana on 10 January 1757, and entered Delhi on 28 January without the least opposition anywhere. "From that day his troops commenced plundering and sacking the city mercilessly, and they kept on dragging away peoples' wives and daughters so cruelly

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**Nur-ud-din*, 14b; *Tarikh-e-Ali*, 255-6.

†*Ali-ud-din*, 14b. For Emperor's invitation, vide Francklin's *Shah Aulum*, 4-5.

‡Vide entries of these dates in *Delhi Chronicle*.

that a large number of them overborne by the delicacy of their feelings preferred to commit suicide, and God only knows the number and nature of all other violence perpetrated in that unfortunate city for a month".*

Hindus were ordered to paint their foreheads as a distinguishing badge of the non-believers. Those who failed to do so were severely beaten and fined†. It is clear that the brunt of Afghan-Rohilla persecution fell heavily on Hindus.

While the Afghan troopers numbering about 80,000 were busy in plundering and persecuting the people of Delhi and its neighbourhood, the Shah turned towards the court grandees. Imad-ul-mulk, the Delhi Wazir, was ordered to hand over all his gold and jewels. On his pleading poverty, he was "chastized to an extreme degree of dishonour",‡ and his servants were severely beaten. He surrendered ornaments and gold to the value of one kror of rupees and gold coins worth above three lakhs.

Intizam-ud-daulah, the ex-wazir, was summoned, and commanded to produce one kror of rupees immediately. He replied: "This moment beyond this one ring that I have on my finger, I have no control over even one rupee". He was threatened to be punished by pillory, which was placed before him, declaring also that he would "issue an order for a beating with sticks". Intizam-ud-daulah stood before the Shah trembling with his face white as a sheet. The Shah said: "This day will I have the money; I have heard that in the house of Qamr-ud-din Khan there lie stored twenty krors of rupees; and out of this accumulation this son of his has covenanted to pay two krors. I relinquish part, but this day I mean to realize one kror, be it by gentle means or by torture. Let the position of the treasure store be pointed out; or if not, I will order a bastinadoing."

Intizam-ud-daulah replied: "Whatever treasure there was, my father caused to be buried within his mansion. The widow, Sholapuri Begam knows about it." The Begam was immediately ordered to be produced. "This old lady, the daughter-in-law of one grand wazir, the widow of another, and the mother of a third, was

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**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 84b, 85a, 86b, 88b; *Miskin*, 138; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 99; *Husain Shahi*, 36-7; *Farah Bakhsh*, 38b; *Siyar*, iii, 54; *Rajwade*, vi, 365; *Irshad-ul-Mustqim*, 295a.

†*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 99a; *Delhi Chronicle, dated* 29 January 1757.

‡*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 29 January 1757.

told that unless she showed the spot, iron pins would be driven in underneath the nails of her fingers. She fainted at the threat, and on recovery pointed out the room of the buried hoard". After three days' constant digging of the floor and breaking up of the ceilings goods and cash worth one and a half krors were recovered. "Two hundred gold candle-sticks of the size of a man were recovered from underneath the earth, in addition to a large quantity of invaluable diamonds, emeralds, pearls and rubies, mattings and carpets of foreign make, and gold-and-silver-covered maces, which were taken possession of by the Shah*". In addition, "the Afghans selected one hundred beautiful women from the haram-sarai and carried them along†".

The houses of all the rich nobles were searched and dug up including that of the city Kotwal Faulad Khan. The residences of all the persons who had fled were broken open and plundered including that of Said-ud-din Khan-e-saman, Rajah Nagarmal and Hiranand Jauhari, the prince of Jewellers"‡.

A regular levy was imposed on every house in the city and its suburbs. Afghan soldiers were posted in every street and lane. They demanded more than the capacity of the people to pay. Beating and torture was applied almost in every case. People wanted to sell their property, but there was no customer. Thousands of men and women died under torture. Thousands took poison and jumped into wells. Even those who had paid were sacked again§.

Marathas in Delhi

At this time there were two agents of the Peshwa in Delhi. Bapu Mahadev Pandit Hingane was the diplomatic representative, while Antaji Mankeshwar was the commander of a Maratha contingent of 5,000. In December 1756 Antaji was at Etawah, 296 kilometres south-east of Delhi. He was summoned by the Emperor, and he arrived at Delhi on 30 December 1756 at the head of 3 to 4 thousand troops. He was asked to check the progress of the invader. He marched along the road to Karnal. The Afghan advance-guard

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*_Tazkirah-e-Imad-ul-mulk_, 218-20. quoted by Ganda Singh, in his '_Ahmad Shah Durrani_', 166.

†_Ibid_, 167.

‡_Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani_, 100b; _Husain Shahi_, 37; _Tarikh-e-Ahmad_, 9.

§_Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani_, 100b-101a; _Sarkar_, ii, 101-2. _Khair-ud-din_, 42-3; _Delhi Chronicle_ gives details of Durrani atrocities day by day.

under Jahan Khan in numerous batches was advancing upon the capital from all sides. On 16 January 1757 one batch came into conflict with Antaji at Narela, 26 kilometres north of Delhi. He was pushed back with a loss of about one hundred men and horses. On his way back Antaji was attacked by Najib-ud-daulah who now openly went over to the side of the Durrani*.

On 17 January 1757 the Durrani forces occupied Luni, 10 kilometres north-east of Delhi on the Jamuna and besieged Shahdara. As Antaji and Mahadev Hingane were not on good terms, Antaji leaving Bapu Pandit at the mercy of the invader quietly slipped away with all his troops to Faridabad, 26 kilometres south of Delhi, a slightly fortified place of Surajmal Jat. On 21 January a Durrani force went to besiege the town, but it "was slain and turned out by Antaji and the Jat army†". After his arrival at Delhi, Ahmad Shah despatched Jahan Khan on 1 February 1757 at the head of 20,000 strong troopers. There was a tough fight with the Jats and Antaji in the night in which 1,000 Marathas lost their lives. Antaji and his Jat allies escaped to Mathura. Faridabad was destroyed by fire. The Afghans on 2 February "brought 57,000 heads of poor people saying these were Marathas and Jats. The Shah rewarded them at eight rupees per head". On this very day "Raja Bapu Pandit (Hingane) was taken from his mansion to the Shah". He was allowed to come back to his own house on 4 February on a promise to pay the invader twenty lakhs. He fled away from the city on 16 February 1757. Antaji and Hingane took shelter in Kumbher fort‡.

Surajmal offers only diplomatic submission, February 1757

In the course of the fourth Durrani invasion such was the degradation and wretched condition of the Mughal Empire that up to the time of the Afghan occupation of the imperial capital not a single shot was fired and not even one Mughal sacrificed his life to check the progress of the invader from Peshawar to Delhi.

There were only two peoples who were not ready to submit so easily. Of these the small Maratha force then present in the north

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**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 91a-92a. *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 30-12-1756, 16-1-1757.

†*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 17, 21 January 1757. Twenty-one January being Friday Khutba was read in the name of Ahmad Shah Durrani in the Jama Masjid and Emperor of Alamgir Sani vacated his own appartments in the Red Fort for the invader.

‡*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 2, 4, 16 February 1757.

under Antaji Mankeshwar had been completely routed. Surajmal Jat now remained to be dealt with. He had sent a letter of submission to Ahmad Shah at Delhi. He had also signed a petition submitted by Intizam-ud-daulah, Rajah Nagarmal and others requesting the Shah to take Imad-ul-mulk with him to Qandhar and offered him a tribute of 50 lakhs. The Shah demanded Surajmal's presence in his camp and the payment of tribute. Surajmal left Mathura for his strong fortress of Kumbher. A large number of people from Delhi had taken refuge with him. Some of these were required by the Shah, but Surajmal declined to surrender them, saying: "When the leading Zamindars come to attend His Majesty's presence, this slave will also kiss the (royal) threshold. How can I send Rajah Nagar Mall and others who have sought asylum with me"?*

Jawahir Singh expels a Durrani foraging party, February 1757

Surajmal had appointed his son Jawahir Singh to take care of the Jat territory near Delhi, while he had himself retired to Kumbher. An Afghan party was detected by Jawahir Singh foraging near Faridabad. Jawahir Singh routed them and seized nearly 150 horses.†

Abdus Samad's expedition, February 1757

On hearing this disastrous news the Shah immediately ordered Abdus Samad Khan to punish the Jats. He was instructed to go at night and lie in ambush about four or five kilometres from the camp of the enemy. From there he was to depute about one hundred Afghans who were to deliver the assault and then turn back at once in order to lure the foe. When they would reach the place of ambush, they were to be suddenly attacked and destroyed. Abdus Samad acted as he was directed. Jawahir Singh had nearly been entrapped, but he managed to escape, having sacrificed a number of his followers. The Afghans ravaged many villages, and with 500 severed heads of the people in their bags (*tobras*) they returned to the Shah's camp.†

A traveller going from Agra to Delhi passed through Faridabad on 8 February 1757 and observed: "All places from Delhi to Faridabad are without a lamp, the Jats are plundering the caravans of the fugitives, and near Faridabad 2,000 corpses are lying on the ground stripped of all their clothings‡".

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*Samin, *Halat-e-Ahmad Shah Abdali*, 14; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 83b-84a; *Sarkar*, ii, 114-5.

†*Samin*, 16; *Qanungo*, i, 98-9.

‡*Delhi Chronicle* dated 8 February 1757.

Execrable Massacre of the Jat country

The Holi, one of the greatest festivals of the Hindus fell from 28 February to 6 March 1757. The devilish Durrani and his infernal guide Najib-ud-daulah at the head of about a lakh of troopers decided to celebrate this carnival with the blood of innocent Hindus. On the night between 26 and 27 February, he detached his advance-guard of 20,000 under Jahan Khan and Najib-ud-daulah with another 20,000 of his own troops with following instructions: "Move into the boundaries of the accursed Jat, and in every town and district held by him slay and plunder. The city of Mathura is a holy place of the Hindus; .....let it be put entirely to the edge of the sword. Up to Agra leave not a single place standing*". Both of them carried out excerable command to the letter.

The soldiers were allowed a free gift of the booty acquired by them. They were to receive five rupees per severed head brought in the *tobras* of their horses to the Prime Minister's tent where they would be counted†.

Devastation in Bulandshahr District, February 1757

The eye-witness Ghulam Hasan Samin of Bilgram writes:— "Sikandarabad was full everywhere of fugitives from the environs of Delhi. Thence to Anupshahar (a four days' march) in every village that we passsed, not a sign of an inhabitant was to be seen, and along the route unnumbered dead bodies were lying. Anupshahar too was crowded with fugitives from Delhi to such an extent that it was difficult to force a way through its lanes.....The Shah had ordered a general slaughter in parganah Dasna, the zamindari of Rai Bahadur Singh‡".

Desolation of Mathura, 1 March 1757

Jahan Khan and Najib made straight for Mathura. Surajmal's son Jawahir Singh with 10,000 Jats stopped their progress at the village of Chaumuha, 13 kilometres north of Mathura, on 28 February 1757. "From sunrise the battle raged for nine hours, and at the end of it 'ten to twelve thousand infantry lay dead on the two sides taken together; the wounded were beyond count§". Jawahir

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*Samin, in *Indian Antiquary*, 1907, p. 51.
†*Ibid*, 23.
‡*Indian Antiquary*, 1907, pp. 15-6.
§*Sarkar*, ii, 118.

Singh turned towards Ballabgarh to face another engagement against the Durrani, while Jahan Khan and Najib entered Mathura on 1 March 1757.

About Mathura Ghulam Hasan says: "Everywhere in lane and bazar lay the headless trunks of the slain; and the whole city was burning. Many buildings have been knocked down. A naked man emerged from the ruins and asked me for a little food. I gave him some money and asked: 'who art thou'? He said: 'I am a Musulman, I was a dealer in jewellery, my shop was a large one. In addition to precious stones and engraved and mounted goods, I had 4,000 rupees in cash in the shop. On the day of the slaughter the Shah's army suddenly appeared, when nobody had the least expectation of them; it was at dawn. A horseman, drawn sword in hand, came at me and tried to kill me, I said I was a Musulman. He said: 'Disclose your privities'. I undid my cloth. He continued: 'Whatever cash you have give to me that I may spare your life.' I gave him my 4,000 rupees. Another came and cut me on the stomach with his sabre. I fled and hid in a corner. My shop was emptied. For several days past I have had nothing to eat, but a few uncooked grains of corn. Camp followers come in day after day and knock down the houses. In many places buried treasure is discovered and carried off.'.....When I reached the bank of the Jamnah, I found it was fordable. The water flowing past was of a yellowish colour, as if polluted by blood. The man said: 'For seven days following the general slaughter, the water flowed of a blood-red colour. Now fourteen days have elapsed, and the colour of the water has turned yellow.' At the edge of the stream I saw a number of Bairagi and Sunayasi huts, huddled close together. These men are ascetics of the Hindu faith. In each hut lay a severed head with the head of a dead cow applied to its mouth and tied to it with a rope round its neck"*.

Many temples were pulled down. Idols were broken to pieces, and kicked. Najib-ud-daulah and his Rohilla troops dug hidden treasures, and carried away a large number of pretty young Hindu girls†.

**Indian Antiquary*, 1907, p. 62.

†*Nur-ud-din*, 15b; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*. 105b-106a; *Tazkirah-e-Imad-ul-mulk*, 241-2; *Sarkar*, ii, 118-9; *Qanungo*, i, 103; *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, *Chapter* iv.

Ballabgarh Captured, 4 March 1757

The fort of Ballabgarh was not a strongly fortified fort. Jawahir Singh was in this fort. He had two Maratha chiefs with him, Antaji Mankeshwar and Shamsher Bahadur. Bapu Mahadev Hingane, the Peshwa's resident *vakil* at Delhi had already taken refuge in the fort of Kumbher. The Shah personally directed the siege. The Jats put up a brave fight, but they could not resist the heavy fire of the Afghans. Jawahir Singh and the Maratha leaders managed to escape in the night on 3 March 1757, the former in the disguise of a Qizalbash soldier. They joined Surajmal at Kumbher. The fort was captured, its inmates slain and all property plundered.*

From this place the Afghans issued out to slaughter and plunder. Ghulam Hasan Samin who was present in the train of Ahmad Shah Durrani says that they left the camp at midnight. One horseman took ten to twenty horses each attached to the tail of the horse in front. They came back at about 9 o'clock in the morning. All the horses were loaded with booty and girl captives were placed on that. Hundreds of men captives carried on their heads bundles of severed heads. All these heads were heaped before the Prime Minister's tent, where they were counted and the soldiers were paid five rupees per head. At the time of reckoning the heads of the male captives were also cut off. "Daily did this manner of slaughter and plundering proceed. And at night the shrieks of the women captives who were being ravished, deafened the ears of people†".

Sack of Brindaban, 6 March 1757

The same story is narrated of Brindaban, 11 kilometres north of Mathura: "Wherever you gazed you beheld heaps of slain; you could only pick your way with difficulty, owing to the quantity of bodies lying about and the amount of blood spilt. At one place we reached, we saw about two hundred dead children lying in a heap. Not one of the dead bodies had a head.....The stench and fetor and effluvium in the air were such that it was painful to open your mouth or even draw a breath. Everyone held his nose and stopped his mouth with his handkerchief while he spoke‡".

**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 103b-105a; *Tazkirah-e-Imad-ul-mulk*, 240; *Qanungo* i, 100-1; *Sarkar*, ii, 116-7.

†*Indian Antiquary*, 1907, p. 60.

‡*Ibid*, 62.

Slaughter of Nagas at Gokul, 16 March 1757

Ahmad Shah Durrani was following Jahan Khan. He reached Mathura on 15 March, crossed the river, and halted at Mahaban, 10 kilometres south-east of Mathura. Gokul was 3½ kilometres away from his encampment. It was the hermitage of Nagas, the stark-naked soldier-saints whose number at that time was 4,000. They were attacked by the Afghans. A terrible scuffle took place in which each side lost about 2,000 men. Jugal Kishor, an agent of the Bengal Viceroy, was present in the Shah's camp. He assured the Shah that Gokul was the residence of Hindu beggars and possessed no wealth and women. At this he recalled his troops, and the temple of Gokul Nath was saved*.

Massacre at Agra, 21 March 1757

Agra was plundered by Jahan Khan at the head of 15,000 soldiers on 21 March. About 2,000 persons were slain here; but he failed to capture the fort. He secured about one lakh of rupees as tribute collected by the people themselves. Then he was suddenly recalled by the Durrani who lay encamped near Mathura. Jahan Khan left Agra on 24 March 1757.

Nature came to the rescue of the unfortunate inhabitants where the government of the country had failed in its duty. The Afghan camp was situated at Mahaban, 21 kilometres down the Jamuna from Brindaban. The water being at its lowest ebb, its flow was choked with dead bodies. The troops had to drink the polluted water of the river. Consequently cholera broke out in the Afghan army, carrying about 150 soldiers daily. "It took one hundred rupees to purchase one *ser* of tamarind, a drink of tamarinds being prescribed with benefit†".

Surajmal's diplomacy succeeds

Surajmal possessed a rich country, three strong fortresses of Bharatpur, Dig and Kumbher, a large army, huge quantities of war material and a big treasury. He was the shrewdest man of the age. He knew that Ahmad Shah would not stay in India after March, on account of hot and oppressive climate of the country, particularly

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**Indian Antiquary* (1907), 61; *Rajwade*, i, 63; *Sarkar*, ii, 121-2.

†*Indian Antiquary* (1907), 64-5; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 109a; *Rajwade*, i, 163; *SPD*, xxi, 111; xxvii, 146, 152, 155; *Sarkar*, ii, 128.

in his territory which was sandy. He wanted to bide his time, and did not come to fight the Shah in the open.

When cholera broke out in his camp, Ahmad shah felt compelled to return home, especially in view of his being laden with vast amounts of riches, which must be conveyed safely to Afghanistan. He kept his intentions secret, but began to withdraw towards Delhi. When he lay encamped at Shergarh, 30 kilometres north of Mathura, he made one more frantic effort to extort money from Surajmal. He deputed two agents, one Jugal Kishor Hindu from Bengal and the other an Afghan. They were armed with a letter from the Durrani, threatening to destroy his forts if money was not immediately paid. The Raja gave a diplomatic reply in writing. He declared himself a poor and insignificant zamindar, who possessed neither riches nor power or prestige. He openly confessed that the Durrani was a very powerful emperor, the bestower of crowns, and the master of a vast empire and countless wealth. Fighting against such a person was beneath the grace and dignity of such a great emperor. He pointed out that in case of victory over him not much of glory would be won; but in case of his defeat the emperor would be ruined in his fame and prestige. He further added that he was not afraid of death , being above 50, and having lived a full and rich life. He humbly requested the Durrani not to turn his attention against a weak man like him. If the Shah was intent on fighting, he was ready to meet him in the siege of anyone of his forts, the strength of which could only be tested in actual contest.

He, however, kept the envoys busy in making one proposal after another, sometimes promising a few lakhs of tributes, and at others pleading poverty. Simultaneously he had employed agents who were transmitting daily news about the Shah's policy and his doings. On getting the intimation that the Shah had decided to leave, he abruptly dismissed the envoys without paying anything at all*.

Rifling of the Imperial Harem

After his tour of the Jat country, the Durrani returned to Delhi, and sacked it again. Earlier on 30 January 1757 he had stamped coins at the mint in his own name. On the same night he had married his son Timur Shah to Gauhar-un-nisa, daughter of

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**SPD*, ii, 72; *Tazkirah-e-Imad-ul-mulk*, 243-5; *Qanungo*, i, 106; *Sakar*, ii, 126; *Ganda Singh*, 180-4.

Almgir II. On 5 April he forcibly wedded Hazrat Begam*, a 16 year old daughter of Emperor Muhammad Shah and Sahiba Mahal. The weeping bride was accompanied by Malikah-e-Zamani and Sahiba Mahal (widows of Muhammad Shah), and Muhtaram-un-nisa, a daughter of the late Emperor Ahmad Shah. Sixteen more ladies of the imperial harem and many concubines and maid-servants were also taken away to Qandhar†.

Booty carried by the Durrani

The booty acquired by the Durrani was computed at between ten to thirty karors. "Abdali's own goods were loaded on 28,000 camels, elephants, mules, bullocks and carts, while 200 camel-loads of property were taken by Muhammad Shah's widows who accompanied him, and these too belonged to him. Eighty thousand horse and foot followed him, each man carrying away spoils. His cavalry returned on foot, loading their booty on their chargers. For securing transport, the Afghan king left no horse or camel in any one's house, not even a donkey. The guns he had brought for taking the Jat forts, he abandoned because their draught-cattle had to be loaded with his plunder, and the Jat Rajah took these guns away into his fort. In Delhi not a sword was left with anybody‡".

Annexation of Sarhind, March 1757

Abdali annexed the Sarhind division to his kingdom, thus extending his eastern boundary to the river Jamuna up to the neighbourhood of Panipat. This was placed in charge of Abdus Samad Khan of Hashtnagar. Emperor Alamgir II was confirmed in his office, and Imad-ul-mulk was to continue as his Wazir. Najib-ud-daulah was appointed his plenipotentiary and Mir Bakhshi of the Mughal Empire. On his way he obtained from Najabat Khan, the Zamindar of Kunjpura, a sum of 20 lakhs. He appointed his son Timur Shah the Viceroy of the Panjab with Jahan Khan as his deputy and guardian and returned to Afghanistan in April 757§.

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*Malikah-e-Zamani summoned Bapu Mahadev Hingane from his hiding place to Delhi to consult him as the Durrani wanted to marry this girl "by force". He came to the Red Fort on 21 March 1757. "A tumult began. The soldiers in the Fort turned him out". [*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 21 March 1757.]

†*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 101b-102a, 109b-110a, 111b-112a, 113a-115b; *Miskin*, 65b, 66a: *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 30, 31 January, 5 April 1757.

‡Sarkar, ii, 103; *SPD*, ii, 71; xxi, 98, 118; xxvii, 152; *Rajwade*, i, 63.

§*SPD*, ii, 71; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 111a-112b, 115b; *Tazkirah-e-Imad-ul-mulk*, 254; *Sarkar*, ii, 129-30.

CHAPTER VIII

MARATHA CONQUEST OF THE PANJAB

Jahan Khan's poor administration

Ahmad Shah's son Timur Shah was in charge not only of the Panjab but of all the Indian territories belonging to the Durrani Empire. Panjab being the only troublesome province, his headquarter was fixed at Lahore. An Afghan army of about 10,000 men was left with him. He was instructed to recruit fresh contingents of Turki and Afghan soldiers who were roaming about all over the Panjab. To secure the support of Ranjit Dev of Jammu, parganahs of Aurangabad, Sankhatra, and Zafarwal in the district of Sialkot adjoining his territory were given to him*.

Timur Shah was only eleven years old. Hence the administration was exclusively carried on by Jahan Khan. The Afghan general was a seasoned warrior, but a poor administrator. He started persecuting the Sikhs. He attacked them at Amritsar on 11 November 1757 when they were celebrating the Diwali. He pulled down their holy shrine, polluted the sacred tank, and cut off all the Sikhs who protected the pious precincts. In December 1757 he belaboured the Sikh saint, Sodhi Barbhag Singh of Kartarpur, and demolished the temple. The fanatical outrages committed by Jahan Khan aroused the Sikh fury, and they resolved to retaliate, and joined Adina Beg Khan†.

On the approach of Ahmad Shah Durrani in the Panjab in December 1756, Adina Beg Khan, the able Governor of the Jalandhar Doab, had escaped into the Siwalik Hills at Bharwain, about 40 kilometres north of Hoshiarpur. After taking charge of the Panjab, Jahan Khan called upon Adina Beg to take up the administration of the Jalandhar Doab and to present himself at Lahore.

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*Miskin, 66a-70a; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 100; *Husain Shahi*, 32; *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 132-3; *Sialkot Gazetteer*, 16.

†*Miskin*, 162-5; *Browne*, ii, 19; *Malcolm*, 94; *Ratan Singh*, 413; *Gian Singh*, 722.

Adina Beg rightly had suspicions against Jahan Khan. The veteran chief evaded prompt compliance. Jahan Khan pillaged the Jalandhar Doab and threatened Adina Beg Khan with pursuit and punishment. The wary Governor then showed willingness to undertake the administration provided he was exempted from attending the court. The Khan agreed, and issued to him a patent and a *khilat* for an annual subsidy of 36 lakhs of rupees*.

After sometime Jahan Khan demanded Adina Beg's immediate presence in Lahore. Adina Beg distrusted the Afghan general and flatly refused to come. Jahan Khan was annoyed, and sent a strong force against him. Adina Beg retired to the northern hills and held consultations with Sodhi Barbhag Singh of Kartarpur then living at Mairi about 24 kilometres from Hoshiarpur. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the chief leader of the Dal Khalsa also joined them. Adina Beg Khan offered the Sikhs a heavy tribute and granted them concessions of loot. Thus the whole Dal Khalsa got ready to fight on his side†.

The Sikhs baffle the Afghans, January-February 1758

Adina Beg Khan and his Sikh allies emerged from their impenetrable haunts. Jahan Khan deputed Murad Khan to fight them. In the engagement that followed, the Afghans were badly defeated, and all their stores and baggage fell into the hands of Adina Beg. The Sikhs then "ravaged all the districts of the Doab" and collected an immense booty.

Raghunathrao and Malharrao then roaming about in the region situated on both sides of the Jamuna were delighted at these occurrences in the Panjab. A Marathi despatch says: "The Sikhs gathering together by our advice began to upset Abdali's rule; from some places they expelled his outposts. They defeated S'aadat Khan Afridi, plundered all the Jalandhar Doab, and forced him to flee to the hills. By the order of the *subahdar*, Khwajah Abid Khan came from Lahore with 20,000 horse and foot to fight the Sikhs. In the end he was defeated, many of his captains were slain, all of his camp and baggage were plundered, and all the artillery left behind by Abdali was captured‡".

**Miskin*, 145, 165; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 100; *Siyar*, iii, 63; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 120a.

†*Ghulam Ali*, i, 55-6; *Siyar*, iii, 64; *Ahmad Shah*, 871-2; *Ganesh Das*, 156.

‡*SPD*, ii, 83.

Tahmas Khan Miskin then present in Lahore writes: "After this every force in whatever direction it was sent came back defeated and vanquished. Even the environs of Lahore were not safe. Every night thousands of Sikhs used to fall upon the city and plunder the suburbs lying outside the walls of Lahore, but no force was sent out to repel them, and the city gates were closed one hour after nightfall. It brought extreme disgrace to the Government and utter lawlessness prevailed".*

Marathas invade the Panjab, March 1758

Adina Beg Khan, the shrewd observer of men and matters, had clearly foreseen a fresh Durrani invasion to restore his administration in the Panjab. His wrath was then bound to fall upon him and the Sikhs. He looked around for help, and realized that the only people who could measure their strength with the Durrani were the Marathas. It so happened that the Maratha army under Raghunathrao lay encamped at Delhi. The Maratha leaders were already contemplating conquest of the Panjab in order to maintain their hold on Delhi. So they listened to the approach of Adina Beg Khan with care and attention. In the first week of January 1757, Malhar was touring in the Karnal district. Adina Beg despatched his agents Harlal and Sadiq Beg to wait upon Malharrao, and invite the Marathas to conquer the Panjab. He made repeated requests to Raghunathrao to extend the Maratha dominions to the Khaibar Pass. He pointed out the rich harvest of spoil, and on his own part promised to pay them one lakh of rupees for every day of marching and Rs. 50,000 for halting†.

Raghunathrao accepted Adina Beg's offer. The grand Maratha army got ready to march. It included Malharrao Holkar, Sakharam Bapu, Manaji Paygude, Gangadhar Bajirao, Hari Raghunath Bhide, Bapuji Trimbak, Renako Anaji, Gopalrao Ganesh Barve, Rayaji Sahdev, Tukoji Sindhia, Narsoji Pandit, Khandoji Kadam and Vithal Shivdeo.

Fall of Sarhind, March 1758

The Maratha invasion of the Panjab began towards the end of February 1758. Raghunathrao at the head of a large army was at

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**Miskin*, 166.

†*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 164b; *Miskin*, 167-8; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 100; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 463b; *Husain Shahi*, 43; *Ghulam Ali*, i, 56; *Siyar*, iii, 64; *Ahwal-e-Adina Beg Khan*, 55b.

Mughal-ki-Sarai near Ambala on 5 March, at Rajpura on 6 March, at Sarai Banjara on 7 March, and in the vicinity of Sarhind on 8 March. The account of the siege of Sarhind in the words of a contemporary historian of Delhi is reproduced here: "The Maratha troops beyond number from this side and Adina Beg Khan collecting an army of the Sikhs, the worshippers of Nanak, who practised highway robbery in the province of the Panjab from the other side of the Satluj came to Sarhind. Abdus Samad Khan, Abdali's Governor, finding himself unable to fight shut himself up in the fort. The Maratha army and Adina Beg Khan laid siege to the place. After a few days of firing Abdus Samad Khan and Jangbaz Khan fled away [21 March]. The Marathas overtook and imprisoned them. As the Marathas and the Sikhs knew nothing but plundering, they so thoroughly looted the inhabitants of Sarhind, high and low, that none, either male or female, had a cloth on his or her person left. They pulled down the houses and carried off the timber. They dug out floors and seized whatever they could lay their hands on*".

Clash between Marathas and Sikhs, 24 March 1758

This was the first regular contact between Maratha army and the Sikhs. The Marathas soon discovered that the Sikhs were even more aggressive than themselves, as they had secured the lion's share in the plunder of Sarhind, they being the local people familiar with the place and its people. One thing more noted by the Marathas was that the Sikhs individually and collectively possessed a spirit of independence, and boldness of manners which they had not seen in any other part of India. This touched their pride and feelings of superiority.

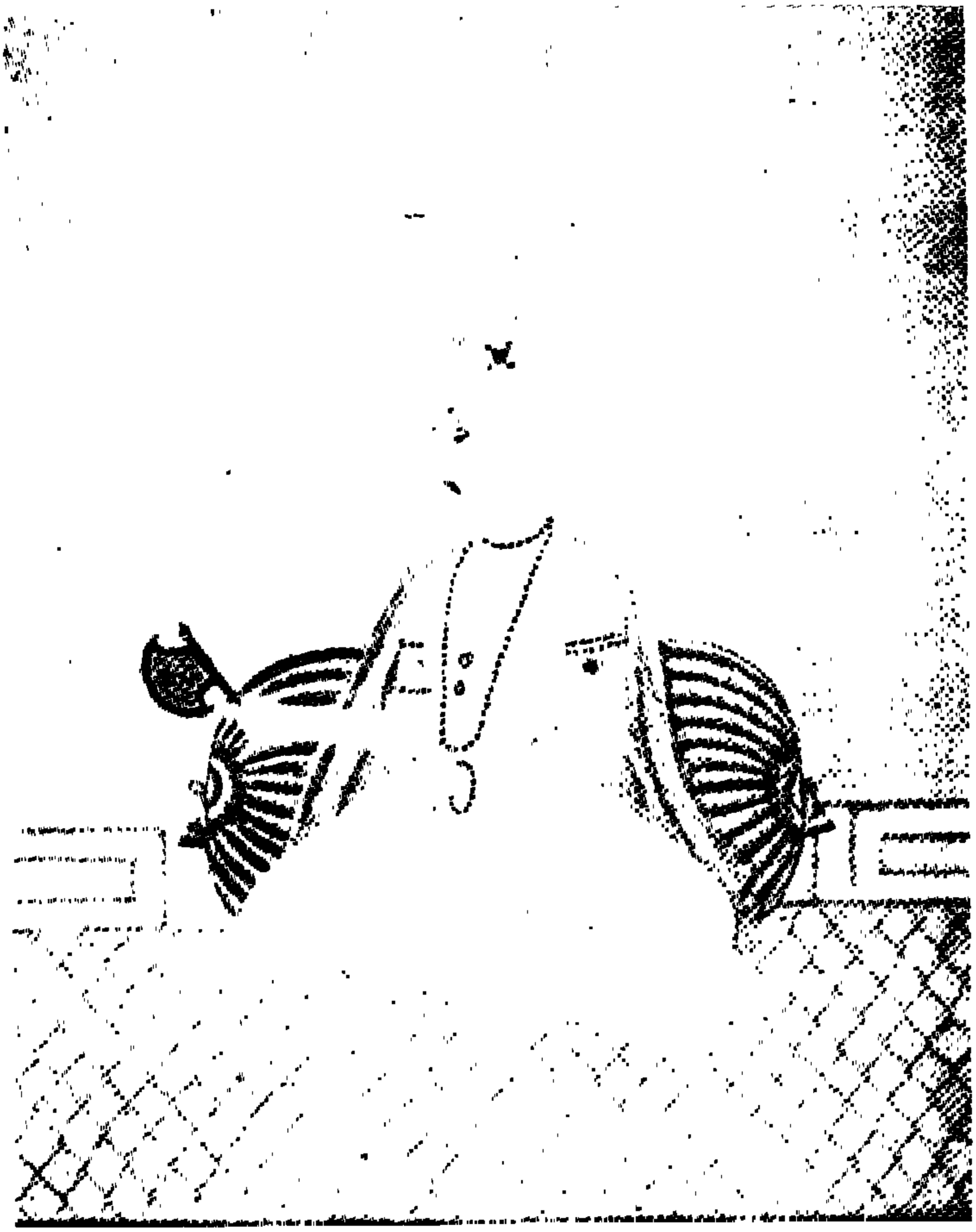
The Marathas tried to obtain at least half the share in the booty. "A skirmish took place between the two, but peace was soon brought about by Adina Beg Khan. It was then agreed that, as there was a fear of a collision between the two warrior people, the Sikhs, who numbered about fifteen thousand, should always keep two stages ahead of the Marathas in their march upon Lahore†".

Jahan Khan decides to retire to Afghanistan, April 1758

On hearing the news of the Maratha siege of Sarhind Jahan Khan came out of Lahore at the head of 2,000 troops. He wasted 40

**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 311; *SPD.* xxvii. 220; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 101; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 877.

†*Tazkirah-e-Imad-ul-mulk*, 379-80; *Ratan Singh*, 423-4; *Ganda Singh*, 201.



RAGHUNATHRAO

(courtesy : Phoenix Publications Bombay)

days in scouting for intelligence at Batala, Hoshiarpur and other places, but did not venture to face the formidable enemy. On hearing that the Marathas had crossed the Satluj and were fast approaching Lahore, he returned to the capital, and finding himself unable to stem this torrent of invasion decided on retiring precipitately to Afghanistan*.

Expulsion of the Afghans from the Panjab, April 1758

Tahmas Khan Miskin, an eye-witness of these events at Lahore, gives an interesting pen-picture of the expulsion of the Afghans from the Panjab. He says that Jahan Khan decided on vacating Lahore on 19 April. He set up his camp at Shahdara across the Ravi and conveyed there Timur's mother and his own women and relations first of all. The other Durrani chiefs and all the troops carried their baggage and property in cart-loads by repeated trips day and night. Meanwhile the news was received that the invaders had crossed the Bias and that their advance-guard under Adina Beg Khan and Manaji Paygude lay encamped about 16 kilometres from Lahore. That very day at noon Timur Shah crossed the river, followed by Jahan Khan. Their troops set fire to the goods which they could not carry away. The eunuchs then mounted the women of Timur Shah and Jahan Khan in litters on camels and on horses, and the whole Afghan camp moved onward towards Kabul. On this day the masterless city was in a state of utter confusion and terror, and robbers and marauders of the town and its neighbourhood were busy in plundering the defenceless people of their money and property†.

Marathas pursue Afghans, April 1758

Tahmas Khan Miskin voluntarily took charge of the capital, shut its gates after sunset, and patrolled the streets the whole night. At about 9 o'clock on 20 April 1758, five hundred Maratha horse-men, and 100 of Khwajah Mirza Khan's Mughalia troops under 'Ashur Ali Khan, whom Miskin knew well, arrived at the Delhi Gate of Lahore, and showed him written orders of their chiefs. Miskin at once opened the Gate, and entrusted the city to his care. Khwajah Mirza Khan at the head of 1,000 Mughals and Manaji Paygude with 10,000 Marathas reached the next day. The same morning Timur Shah retired from Shahdara, leaving several

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**Miskin*, 80a-81b. *Tazkirah-e-Imad-ul-mulk*, 381-2; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 101.

†*Miskin*, 171-8; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 312; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 101.

thousand soldiers in the rear in charge of Mir Hazar Khan. Khwajah Mirza Khan crossed the Ravi, and fell upon Mir Hazar Khan who fled away after a little fighting. They were overtaken and besieged on all sides by the Marathas, and after being defeated their leader was captured. At this news Timur Shah and Jahan Khan grew alarmed and quickened their speed.

Raghunathrao and Adina Beg were following in the rear. While passing through Amritsar, Raghunath "paid a reverential visit to the the Sikh Temple". The "Sikh chiefs came and visited the southerners and were honoured*". At Lahore Adina Beg held a public reception in honour of the Maratha *Sardar*. In the Shalimar Garden, the usual place for such functions, he constructed a magnificent platform at a cost of one lakh of rupees. Raghunathrao was seated on this platform and was offered *nazars*. The numerous fountains in the garden were made to play with rose-water and the whole city was illuminated.†

Jahan Khan halted in Sarai Kachhi at Eminabad, 57 kilometres north-west of Lahore, but was overtaken by Khwajah Mirza and Maratha and Sikh troops. The pursuers lacked siege material, and Jahan Khan managed to slip out of the Sarai, though it was a moonlit night. They soon arrived at the Chenab below Wazirabad. Timur Shah and Jahan Khan with their families and leading chiefs crossed the swift river in boats. All the Uzbak, Qizalbash and Afghan soldiers with Timur's entire baggage were on this side of the river. The Marathas and the Sikhs fell upon them, and acquired enormous booty. It was brought to Lahore by 20,000 Marathas and 10,000 Sikhs in several trips. Two hundred captive Afghans were driven in bonds by the Sikhs to Amritsar, where they were compelled under blows and whips to clean out all the rubbish with which Ahmad Shah and Jahan Khan had filled their tank. Khwajah Mirza also enlisted many of the captives in his army‡.

Marathas capture Attock, Peshawar and Multan, April-May 1758

Most of the historians including Sir Jadunath Sarkar were of opinion that the Marathas did not pursue the retiring Afghans

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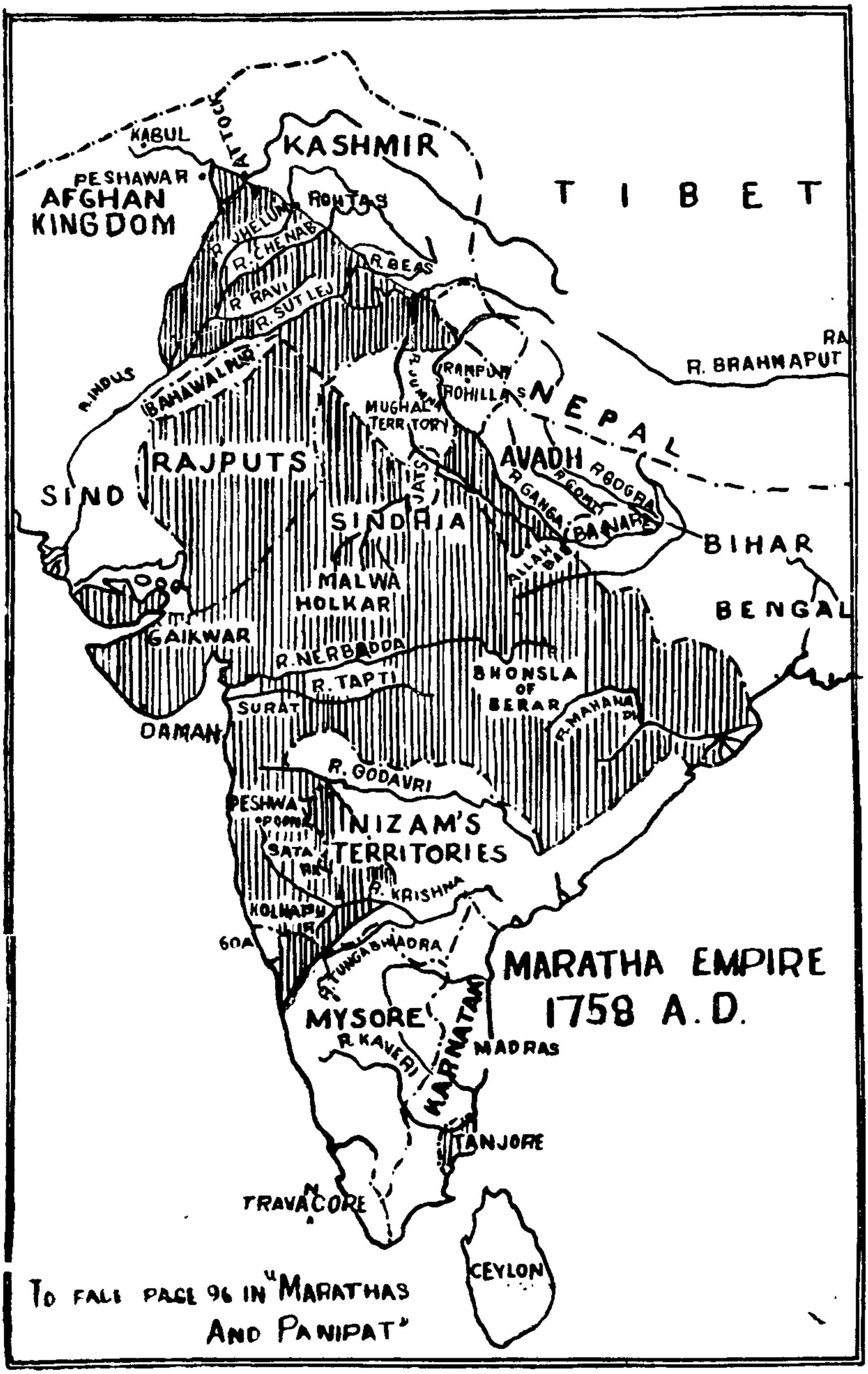
**Ali-ud-din*, 255, quoted by Ganda Singh, 205, f.n.

†*Ali-ud-din*, 118a.

‡*Miskin*, 178-9: *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 312; *SPD*, xxvii, 218; *Tarikh-e-Ibrahim Khan in Elliot*, viii, 267; *Tarikh-e-Ali;* 134; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 100-1; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 102a-b; *Husain Shahi*, 45; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 463b: *Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 10; *Ahmad Shah*, 873; *Shah Yusaf*, 59b-60a; *Haqiqat-e-Bina-o-Anj-e-Firqah-e-Sikhan*, 37.



To fall page 96 in "Marathas And Panipat"

beyond the river Chenab. But some of the almost contemporary writers definitely assert that the pursuit was kept much farther. Muhammad Ali Ansari of Panipat in his history entitled *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, on p. 128, states: "Some Maratha chiefs ran in pursuit up to the river Jehlam and then returned". Further more he says that they extended their rule up to Attock ("*Ta kinar-e-Darya-e-Attock amal namud*"). Imam-ud--din, author of *Tarikh-e-Husain Shahi*, which is purely a history of Ahmad Shah Durrani and his two successors says on p. 45: "The armies of Adina Beg Khan and Marathas arrived at the bank of river Attock (*Bar sar-e-Darya-e-Attock*). They left a strong army on the bank of the river Indus (*Bar had Daryae--Sind*) under Datta Patel to prevent the crossing of the river by the armies of *vilayat*, and to watch that nobody crossed the river and stepped into the Panjab and Hindustan. The other *Sardars* like Subahdar Malharrao and Ragho, etc. with Adina Beg Khan returned".

Muhammad Jafar Shamlu who accompanied Ahmad Shah Durrani in his invasions and was present at the battle of Panipat writes that the Marathas established their rule up to Attock (*Ta Darya-e-Attock b'amal-e-khud awurdah budand**).

Other contemporary Persian records mention that "Tukoji and other cavalry officers sent by Rao Malharji Holkar and Rao Jankoji Sindhia arrived at Peshawar". It appears that eventually Tukoji with 10,000 troops was posted at Peshawar, and Narsoji Pandit at the head of 4,000 men commanded Attock†.

**Shamlu*, 10.

†*Chandrachud Daftar* published by B.I.S. Mandal, Poona, in 1920, letter No. 49, p. 56; *Selection from Chandrachuda Daftar*, published by the Gwalior Record Department in 1934, p. 4; *Akhbar-e-Darbar-e-Mu'alla*, dated 20 December 1758; *Dabholkar Collection*, a Marathi letter dated 4 June 1758; *SPD*, xxi, 163, 178, 179, a letter written on 5 September 1758; *Kincaid* and *Parasnis*, ii, 184; *Najibuddaulah*, 27.

Raghunathrao's letter to the Peshwa dated at Lahore, 4 May 1758. states that he appointed Abdur Rahim, nephew of Ahmad Shah Durrani, Governor of Kabul with Abdus Samad Khan, lately Durrani Governor of Sarhind as his deputy. [cf. *Shejwalkar*, 6, f.n.]

It is further stated in this very letter that the rulers of Sind, Baluchistan, Jammu, Kashmir, and some Durrani chiefs as well, started negotiations with Raghunath. Even the King of Iran offered his co-operation in crushing Ahmad Shah Durani, if the Marathas would agree to fix the boundary at river Indus. Raghunathrao rejected this offer, as he wished to extend the frontiers of Maratha state as far Hindkoh (formerly called Hindukush) and including the province of Qandhar [*Ibid.*]

About the same time Bapuji Trimbak with a force of about 6,000* men was appointed at Multan. He crossed the Indus, and established his rule over Derah Ghazi Khan and its neighbourhood†.

Panjab leased to Adina Beg Khan

Raghunathrao stayed in Lahore for about a month, and then according to Shejwalkar "prepared to return to the Deccan at the express orders of the Peshwa‡." He also did not like to stay in the Panjab, and keep it under his personal charge for several considerations. The Panjab was far away from the home of the Marathas. The rough and slow means of communication of those days made it difficult for them to pay frequent visits to their home. It was also subject to extreme changes of climate, the burning summer and freezing winter. The rivers were not easy to cross. They were also placed in the midst of a hostile population which did not consider Marathas as friends but called them plunderers. Being the frontier province it was exposed to foreign attacks and a fresh Durrani invasion was imminent at any time, especially to recover his lost territories and to retrieve his honour. To crown all they felt exasperated with their Sikh allies who could not be kept by them within bounds. They were also not sure of a steady income from here. Besides the Peshwa was not prepared to spend a copper on maintaining Maratha garrisons in the Panjab. On the contrary he expected something from here. In view of all these circumstances he decided to place it in charge of Adina Beg Khan, who was an experienced administrator, who could successfully handle the Sikhs, and from whom they could easily realize the settled tribute. Raghunathrao, therefore, conferred the title of Nawab on Adina Beg Khan and leased out the province to him for 75 lakhs of rupees a year. The Marathas then returned towards Delhi, arriving on 5 June at Thanesar where they had a religious bath on Somavati Amavash (Monday moonless§ night and day).

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*Sarkar, ii, 216.

†*Khazanah-e-Amirah,* 101; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari,* 128; *Siyar-ul-Mutakharin,* Urdu translation, iii, 64. Nur-ud-din calls him Dado Sideshwar.

[*Najibuddaulah,* 20.] Cf. Shejwalkar, 9.

‡*Panipat,* 7.

§*Delhi Chronicle,* 156; *SPD,* xxvii, 218; *Nur-ud-din,* 21b; *Khazanah-e-Amirah,* 101; *Siyar,* iii, 64; *Ahwal-e-Adina Beg Khan,* 56a; *Khushwaqt Rai,* 91; *Tarikh-e-Ahmad,* 10; *Tarikh-e-Ali,* 134; *Irshad-ul-Mustqim,* 295b; *Hugel,* 265-6; *Tarikh-e-Bhau-o-Janko,* 19.

Adina Beg Khan dies, 15 September 1758

Adina Beg Khan did not like to stay in Lahore. He appointed Khwajah Mirza Khan, now his son-in-law, and his brother Khwajah Said Khan to control the administration at the capital. He set up his headquarters at Batala about the middle of May 1758. In four months he passed from his glory to the grave, dying on 15 September 1758*.

Recall of the Marathas from Peshawar, October 1758

The death of Adina Beg Khan, the last of the notable Governors of the Panjab, let loose the forces of disruption, chaos and confusion. The Sikhs rose in rebellion everywhere. Khwajah Mirza Khan and his assistant Mir Hasan Ali Khan found their position in the capital untenable. They needed Maratha assistance badly. But the Maratha leaders with their main army had gone to the south. Therefore they could not help recalling the Maratha detachments from Peshawar and Attock. Tukoji and Narsoji most unwillingly withdrew their troops, and reached Lahore about the middle of November 1758†.

Rebellion of Afghans and Gakhars and Sabaji's march to Peshawar, November 1758

On the death of Adina Beg Khan, the Delhi Wazir, Imad-ul-mulk, proposed to send Jamil-ud-din Khan and Abaidullah Khan Kashmiri to the Panjab to escheat the cash and property of the deceased Governor. The news of Adina Beg's death reached Raghunath and Malhar when they were in Malwa. They immediately despatched Antaji Mankeshwar and others with a strong force. Antaji stayed at Delhi, but other Marathas under the leadership of Sabaji Patel advanced to the Panjab. They overtook Imad's agents at Sonepat, 43 kilometres away. Finding that the Marathas were bound for Lahore, they hurriedly beat a retreat to the capital.‡

On the departure of Marathas from Peshawar and Attock, the Afghans and Gakhars of the trans-Jehlam region revolted and

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**SPD*, ii, 96; *Farhat-un-Nazirin* in Elliot, viii, 169; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 101.

†"The news arrived that Narsoji Pandit and Tukoji and other cavalry officers sent by Rao Malharji Holkar and Rao Jankoji Sindhia left Peshawar for Lahore as desired by Mir Hasan Ali Khan and Khwajah Mirza Khan".

Cf. *Akhbar-e-Darbar-e-M'ualla* of 20 December 1758. It gives the summary of a previous letter dated 22 November 1758.

[*B.I.S.M. Quarterly*, xxiv-i, No. 93, July 1943, 6-7.]

‡*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 359–60.

plundered Gujrat. Khwajah Mirza Khan won over the Sikhs, and with a strong contingent marched against them. They were pushed across the Jehlam. The rebels collected a larger force, attacked the Khwajah anh his allies, and defeated them. By this time the fresh Maratha contingent had arrived at Lahore from Delhi. On learning of this rebellion, Sabaji immediately rushed to reinforce the Khwajah. The rebels at once dispersed to their homes in the hills. Sabaji marched ahead to Peshawar where he successfully held himself during winter months. Tukoji and Narsoji returned to Lahore to assist Khwajah Mirza Khan in his difficult task.*

Dattaji Sindhia marches to the Satluj, March 1759

When Raghunathrao was at Jaipur on his way to the Deccan, Jankoji Sindhia and Dattaji Sindhia marched from Ajmer and Jodhpur, and waited upon him. He instructed them to advance to the Panjab and settle affairs in that region. They came to Delhi. Imad-ul-mulk, the Delhi Wazir, was expecting a fresh eruption of the Durrani. He wanted the Marathas to fortify the frontier outposts. He offered Dattaji seven or eight lakhs of rupees for this purpose. The terms were settled on 31 January 1759. Dattaji and Jankoji left for the Panjab on 1 February 1759. They reached Machhiwara on the left bank of the Satluj in the beginning of March 1759.

Before leaving Delhi he had summoned Sabaji Patel from Peshawar to his presence to get first-hand information about that difficult frontier province. Sabaji reached Lahore early in April 1759, and met Dattaji at Machhiwara†.

Dattaji found that the Sikhs were asserting their supremacy all over the Panjab. He decided not to cross the river. He invited the neighbouring zamindars. Adina Beg's son who was living in the Jalandhar Doab came to see him with his widowed mother, and offered him some money. He confirmed Sabaji at Peshawar, appointed Tukoji at Attock, Bapurao at Rohtas, Naro Shankar assisted by Narsoji Pandit at Lahore, and Narayanrao at Sarhind.

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*Ibid, 369, 397.

†A letter dated 15 April 1759 says:
"Received the news that Sabaji Patel having returned from Peshawar to the province of Lahore met Tukoji, Khandoji Kadam and other cavalry officers of Rao Malharji Holkar and Rao Jankoji Sindhia who were stationed there". [Cf. *B.I.S.M. Quarterly*, xxiv, i, (93), July 1943, pp. 6–7; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 101; *Tarikh-e-Sultani*, 134.]

Bapuji Trimbak was retained at Multan.* Tahmas Khan Miskin says that the Marathas appointed two Afghan Governors at Lahore and Multan on this occasion†.

Jahan Khan routed by Sabaji, June 1759

Sabaji's departure from Peshawar about the middle of March 1759 was a signal for the refractory Afghans to rise against the Marathas. They invited the Durrani who deputed his commander-in-chief Jahan Khan to seize the frontier outposts. Jahan Khan rushed to Peshawar, captured Attock, and then advanced towards Rohtas. Sabaji sought help from the Sikhs. The united forces marched against Jahan Khan, whom they encountered on the other side of the Jehlam. In a fierce engagement the Afghan general suffered heavily. He lost his son and a large number of troops, himself receiving several wounds‡.

**SPD*, ii, 100; xxi, 171; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 205 b; *Ratan Singh*, 733; *Sarkar*, ii, 78-9. *Sohan Lal*, i, 146-7.

†He writes: "Those Qizalbash chiefs whom he (Khawajah Mirza Khan) had seized from Timur Shah's army united with the Marathas. Their leading chiefs were Ahmad Khan and Saleh Khan. Of these Mirza Ahmad Khan became the *subahdar* of Lahore and Saleh Khan that of Multan. They adopted a thousand and one frauds and tricks and in order to win them over paid some (money) to the Marathas and promised more, and placed Khawajah Mirza Khan in confinement. Then they sent their troops cleverly into the city of Lahore which they seized, and also imprisoned Khawajah Said Khan, brother of the above-mentioned Mirza". [*Miskin*, 194.]

‡*Delhi Chronicle*, 165; *Rajwade*, vi, 373; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 101.

CHAPTER IX

MARATHA—NAJIB STRIFE

From a foot soldier to the command of 1,000

The only one implacable foe of the Marathas in the whole of India, the one who never concealed his hostile feelings, one who never was cringeling in his behaviour towards them; and whom the Marathas knew full well that he was inexorable, whom they could not crush with all the resources of the Indian empire at their command; yet who most successfully inflicted a shattering blow upon the Marathas, who for good destroyed their dream of Hindu-pad-padshahi; and who perhaps gave the Mughal Emperors a longer period to linger on, was Najib-ud-daulah.

Najib Khan was born about 1708. His father, Asalat Khan, was a Yusafzai Afghan of the Umar Khail clan. His home was in the province of Qandhar in Afghanistan. Being extremely poor, he came to India in search of livelihood and military career. His uncle Bisharat Khan was in the service of Ali Muhammad Rohilla at Aonla. Najib Khan also joined the same chief as a foot soldier in 1743, probably on two rupees a month. On account of his ability and capacity for leadership, he was promoted as a Jamadar at Rs. 5 per mensem.* Dunde Khan, a Yusafzai chief of Ali Muhammad, married his daughter† to him. In 1748 Dunde Khan gave him 14 parganahs including Bijnor, Nagina, Sherkot, and Chandpur, all situated to the east of the Ganga. Thus he became a petty landlord. This aroused his ambition to gain more territory. He began to seize slowly but steadily the crownlands in Saharanpur. He distinguished himself in Safdar Jang's campaign against Rohillas in 1751. Ali Muhammad's son Sadullah Khan placed him in command of a regiment of one thousand troopers‡. "He was joined by a multitude

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*_Najibuddaulah_, I iii–iv.

†Another daughter of Dunde Khan was married to Sadullah Khan, son of Ali Muhammad Rohilla. [_Biharilal_, 36.]

‡_Najibuddaulah_, I iv–v, 1–2; _Charles Hamilton_, 131–2.

of Afghan freebooters, and by their means possessed himself of all that valuable tract of country stretching westward from the Ganges to the district of Saharanpur, along the foot of the hills, and southward almost to the gates of Delhi*."

Najib becomes a *Panjhajari* Noble, 1753

In 1753 acute differences arose between Emperor Ahmad Shah and his Wazir Safdar Jang who was also the Nawab of Avadh. The Mir Bakhshi, Imad-ul-mulk, was bitterly hostile to the Wazir. He wished to oust him from office and get it for himself. Imad invited the Rohilla chiefs to take up service under the Emperor. Safdar Jang threatened them with dire consequences if they accepted the offer, and they procrastinated.

The Emperor sent to them his personal envoy. He appealed to them in the name of religion and aroused Sunni fanaticism against the heretic Shia Wazir. Every body present kept quiet. Najib whispered into the ears of the envoy's companion: "Take me with you. I am ready to join you with one thousand men". Najib then settled terms regarding his rank, *jagir* and title all of which were promised.

On seeing Najib's determination many of the soldiers and Jamadars of other Rohilla chiefs deserted their posts and followed Najib. At the time of departure their number rose to seven or eight† thousand foot and two thousand horse. More and more troops joined Najib on the way. By the time he reached Delhi, the number of his troops had risen to 15,000.

On their arrival at Delhi on 2 June 1753 the Emperor conferred upon Najib the title of Najib-ud-daulah and the rank of 5,000‡.

Najib wins a victory over Safdar Jang, June 1753

At this time an open warfare was going on in the capital between the two personages. In this civil war in the capital Marathas and Najib-ud-daulah fought on the same side in full co-operation with each other. Surajmal Jat joined Wazir Safdar Jang. On 5 June Safdar Jang delivered his main assault on the city which failed owing to the bravery and ability of Najib-ud-daulah. Rohillas dug trenches. At the time of the heaviest attack Najib-ud-daulah came out of his

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**Charles Hamilton*, 132.

†The number of foot soldiers is wrongly given seventy-eight thousand; it should be seven or eight thousand. [*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 56b; *Sarkar*, i, 273.]

‡*Najibuddaulah*, 2–5.

trenches. With a coat of mail and a shield on and a staff in hand he encouraged his men to push on. He was struck by a bullet in the arm yet he stuck to his position, and eventually succeeded in expelling the enemy. The city and the fort were recovered by Najib for the Emperor. He lost nearly 400 Rohillas on this day, while Safdar Jang's casualties amounted to 10,000*.

Najib settles at Saharanpur, November 1753

Desultory fighting between Emperor and Imad-ul-mulk the Mir Bakhshi on the one hand, and Wazir Safdar Jang on the other continued for nearly six months. On 25 July 1753 a small Rohilla force was routed by the Jats in the siege of a mud-walled village called Garhi Maidan†.

Najib-ud-daulah's men fell into arrears of pay and they declined to fight at Ballabgarh in September 1753. They harassed Imad-ul-mulk for their salaries. The Mir Bakhshi tried his level best to get money from the Emperor, but failed. Yet Imad was not prepared to lose Rohilla support. He promised to clear their dues on one condition: "You should swear that you would not desert me and help me in whatever I undertake." "Thereupon Najib-ud-daulah brought the Quran and took an oath on it that he would always be loyal to him‡".

The civil war ended on 5 November 1753. Safdar Jang retired to his province of Avadh. "Ghazi-ud-din, conscious of his inability to dispossess him of the country he had seized, and in hopes of rendering him subservient to his future views, obtained for him from Ahmad Shah a royal grant of all those territories§". Najib-ud-daulah received the *faujdari* of Saharanpur and was dismissed. His brother Sultan Khan was retained in service by Imad-ul-mulk at Delhi¶.

Najib-ud-daulah is appointed Mir Bakhshi, February 1757

Having firmly established himself in his personal *jagirs* at Saharanpur, Najib-ud-daulah opened communications with Ahmad Shah Durrani at Qandhar. He maintained regular correspondence

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**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 56b—57b; *Bayan*, 279–80; *Najibuddaulah*, 7–8.
†*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 70a; *Sarkar*, i, 278.
‡*Najibuddaulah*, 9.
§*Charles Hamilton*, 133.
¶*Najibuddaulah*, 9.

with him. He wrote: "I am also an Afghan and you ought to preserve the honour of the Afghans. I have a body of twenty thousand Afghans with me....., while another body of forty thousand Afghans is ready on the other side of the Ganges to serve you. You may come here without any hesitation*".

When in the cold weather of 1756 Ahmad Shah Durrani invaded India, and was approaching the imperial capital, Najib-ud-daulah marched from Saharanpur and entered Delhi. Imad-ul-mulk, the Delhi Wazir, went to see Najib-ud-daulah. The following conversation which took place between them is reported by Sayyid Sherandaz Khan, envoy of Ahmad Khan Bangash to the Durrani in Delhi: "When the (Durrani) Shah drew near to Delhi, I told Najib Khan, 'We must deliver one battle against the Shah'. His answer was, 'Pay me this day two krores of Rupees, cash down, and I will fight'. I replied, 'Nothing is due to you by the state for your arrears and pay, I have handed over to you more than one-half of the (Doab) territories. At a day's notice whence can I produce such a sum of money?' Najib Khan and his followers raised a tumult and for a whole day barred exit from and ingress to my house. That very same day a letter came from the Shah inviting Najib Khan to his camp. At midnight (17-18 January 1757) Najib came out of Delhi and marched off to the Shah's camp†".

The main Maratha army and all their leaders had retired to the Deccan towards the middle of 1755. Only a contingent of 5,000 Marathas under Antaji Mankeshwar was left in Delhi to serve the Emperor. Their expenses amounting to 13 lakhs a year were borne by the Mughal Government. Besides a few Maratha agents with some troops were stationed in the Ganga Doab to manage Hingane's *jagirs* in Meerut and Bulandshahar districts, and Antaji's *jagirs* in Shikohabad, Etawah and Phaphund‡. On the approach of the Durrani after a couple of brushes, they retired to the Jat country.

Najib-ud-daulah remained with the Shah. When Ahmad Shah led a campaign against Surajmal, he accompanied him at the head of his 20,000 troops. He plundered Imad-ul-mulk's stable of elephants situated 50 kilometres from Delhi. He seized the best elephant called *Koh-e-Rawan* which was the favourite animal of

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**Najibuddaulah*, 11.

†*Indian Antiquary*, 1907, p. 44; *Najibuddaulah*, lx.

‡*Sarkar*, ii, 137.

Emperor Muhammad Shah. Najib also took possession of Imad-ul-mulk's district of Sikandarabad. After Jahan Khan's massacre in Mathura, "Najib-ud-daulah and his army encamped there for three days, plundered the city, took away buried treasures and carried away a large number of beautiful women"*.

Ahmad Shah Durrani appointed Najib-ud-daulah Mir Bakhshi or head of the army of the Mughal Empire on 19 February 1757.† At the time of Durrani withdrawal from Delhi Najib was appointed the Durrani plenipotentiary.‡

Najib-ud-daulah usurps Crownlands, April-May 1757

On assuming charge of the office of Mir Bakhshi, Najib took the control of all the crownlands in the neighbourhood of the capital. The Emperor, his family, and his establishment were maintained on the revenues of these districts. Najib, being most unscrupulous remitted no money to the royal exchequer. The Emperor and his Wazir, Imad-ul-mulk, could not dare offend him. The Emperor confessed: "I am a prisoner in the hands of this Ruhela§". He also composed Hindi verses on this subject¶.

Raghunathrao's expedition to the North, 1757

On hearing of the fresh Durrani invasion of India at the end of 1756, the Poona court decided to despatch a strong army to Delhi. In December 1756 Malharrao left Poona for north. Raghunathrao followed him soon after, and joined Holkar at Indore on 14 February 1757. Delhi was then in the hands of the Durrani. Raghunathrao hesitated to advance to the imperial capital. He was not active by temperament, and did not possess capacity for leadership. He was given no money by the Peshwa, and tribute could not be easily collected. Above all he was not on good terms with Malhar who was of the age of his grandfather, about 75 years old.

Recovery of the Ganga Doab, June-July 1757

Instead of marching straight on Delhi, Raghunathrao entered Rajasthan. In May 1757 when the Durrani had reached the confines

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Najibuddaulah, 12.
†*Sarkar*, ii, 103.
‡*Najibuddaulah*, lxii.
§*Ibid*, 13.
¶*Ibid.*

of Afghanistan, Raghunathrao despatched 20,000 troops with Antaji Mankeshwar, Sakharam Bapu and Vithal Shivdev to the Ganga Doab. They reached Agra, crossed the Jamuna and halted at Kasganj on 17 June 1757. They recovered their lost possessions in the Doab without any fighting. It was only in Meerut district that they had two engagements with Najib-ud-daulah's men who were expelled. Thus the Marathas re-occupied Meerut, Sikandarabad, Shikohabad, Etawah, Phaphund, Kora and Jahanabad*.

But the past several years' lawlessness and frequent changes of masters had enabled local people, mostly Gujars, Afghans, and Rajputs to rise to a man seeking lands and riches. Thus writes Sir Jadunath Sarkar: "Hence, the Marathas on their return to the Doab found neither peace nor money, and had even to beg for funds from the Puna Government to save their soldiers from starvation. At the same time the Peshwa was issuing assignments on the hypothetical Doab revenue to every one of his creditors and generals in North India and censuring his local officers there for default of payment. Both Antaji and Bapu Hingane were accused of peculation of their master's dues and their properties were escheated! The art of maintaining an empire eternally on credit has not been discovered by any human brain†".

Imad gains Marathas against Najib, June 1757

The Emperor and the Wazir were both anxious to get rid of Najib. As Najib was the bitterest enemy of the Marathas Imad decided to win them over to his side. He sumnoned Bapu Mahadev Hingane, the Peshwa's permanent representative at the Mughal court, from Kumbher. "Raja Lachhmi Narayan received a *nima astin* for having brought Bapu Pandit to the audience‡". On the arrival of the Maratha advance-guard in the Ganga Doab, a high-sounding title was conferred on him so that he could persuade the Maratha generals to support Emperor and the Wazir. "Rajah Bapu Pandit received a *do panja* and the title of *Maharajadhiraj*.§" Imad also deputed Raja Nagarmal to Anupshahar to negotiate with Maratha chiefs for terms¶.

**SPD*, ii, 76, 79; xxi, 61, 126; *Rajwade*, i, p. 134; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 124b–125b; *Sarkar*, ii, 137–9.

†*Sarkar*, ii, 140.

‡*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 30 April 1757.

§*Ibid*, dated 15 June 1757.

¶*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 120b.

In consequence Raghunathrao started from Rajasthan for Delhi. Sakharam Bapu marched from Anupshahar, and arrived at Patparganj opposite Delhi fort about the middle of July 1757. Imad-ul-mulk and Ahmad Khan Bangash joined him. As regards the payment of money to the Marathas, the Emperor and Wazir both righly declared that the Durrani had left nothing with them. The Marathas closed the ferries and supply of food material was stopped. Dealers engaged in sending grain from Shahdara were plundered. The districts occupied by Najib passed under the control of the Marathas. Najib now devoted all his energy to repel the Marathas from the capital.*

Fighting between Najib and Marathas, August 1757

Najib-ud-daulah garrisoned the Fort with 2,500 Rohillas under Qutab Shah and Mulla Aman Khan. He fixed artillery below the Fort, and got ready to oppose Maratha entry into the city. Some Marathas crossed the Jamuna on 3 August and Najib's men plundered and wounded some of them†. Marathas ravaged the neighbourhood of the garden of Safdar Jang. Aman Khan plundered the outerparts of the old city, houses in Jaisinghpura, and horses of Bapu Pandit‡. The Marathas set up a military post about 30 kilometres south of Delhi. From here they organised a number of raids and clashed with Najib's men. Najib enquired of the Marathas what terms for peace they would offer. They demanded his evacuation from Delhi. So fighting became imperative.

Malharrao and Shamsher Bahadur reached the suburbs of Delhi on 10 August 1757§. Raghunathrao followed them a day later. Fighting commenced from 11 August. The Marathas killed the keeper of the Fort, and plundered old Delhi. Wazir Imad-ul-mulk crossed the Jamuna and entered tents of Raghunathrao. Najib felt very much annoyed at Imad's support of the Marathas. He attacked Imad's mansion in the city, cut down the defenders and his servants and plundered everything. But worst of all he and his soldiers outraged the modesty of Imad's women. These are the ways of ordinary plunderers and not of great generals and nobles. In reality Najib could not rise above the standard of a common trooper from

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**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 125b, 128a–130a; *SPD*, xxvii, 198; *Najibuddaulah*, 13.
†*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 4–8–1757.
‡*Ibid.*
§*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 10–8–1757.

which rank he had started life. Even the rank of 5,000 conferred upon him by the Emperor, and the exalted office of Mir Bakhshi, the third highest position in the empire granted him by Ahmad Shah Durrani, failed to civilise the brute in him*. Fighting continued intermittently during August 1757 . A sharp battle was fought on 15 August, and cannon balls fell below the fort. On 26 August about 700 soldiers of Bahadur Khan were killed. Fighting remained suspended on 27 and 28 August on account of 'Id' festival of Muslims. By this time Najib was reduced to sore straits†.

Najib sues for Peace, September 1757

Raghunathrao knew that the Durrani considered Najib and rightly so as his best ally and friend in India. He therefore feared a fresh Durrani invasion to relieve Najib. Under his instructions Manaji Paygude scouted for intelligence up to Thanesar. He urged the Peshwa to depute Dattaji Sindhia to take up his position in the Panjab to keep himself in touch with the movements of Ahmad Shah.

Just at this time Najib opened negotiations for peace by sending his *vakil* Meghraj to Malharrao's agent Maujiram Bania. Marathas demanded Najib's withdrawal from Delhi, resignation of his post of Mir Bakhshi, and a tribute of 50 lakhs. Najib rejected all the terms except a tribute of five lakhs. As Imad did not desire peace with the ravisher of his *harem* at any price, and Raghunathrao detested Najib's direct negotiation with Malharrao by ignoring him, no agreement could be arrived at‡.

Severe fighting broke out on 30 and 31 August 1757. Najib's ranks began to grow thinner by death and desertion. Famine prevailed in the city. Najib was forced to open negotiations again. Malharrao tried to pacify Imad and Raghunathrao. Najib-ud-daulah sent the following message to Malharrao on 1 September 1757: "I am your (adopted) son§ and I shall act as you bid me. You have done me many favours and it is not proper that you should (now) bare your sword against me. If you say so, I shall go away across the Jamuna, and can entrust Delhi and the empire to the control of whomsoever you please. (2) Bid me and I shall go to

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**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 11–8–1757; *Najibuddaulah*, 13-4.

†*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 15, 23, 25, 26 August 1757.

‡*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 130a–135b; *SPD*, xxi, 136; xxvii, 194, 199; *Najibuddaulah*, 14.

§Malhar was about 75 years old, while Najib was nearly 50.

the Abdali Shah and arrange a peace between you by delimiting your respective boundaries, which would be respected in future by both parties, so that there might not be war again. (3) I shall depute my son Zabita Khan to serve you with a contingent of 5 or 7 thousand men, as a proof of my fidelity. (4) If you do not agree to these terms but are bent on fighting me, I shall unite the Par Ruhellas and others and give you a good battle. He will rule the whole realm whom God gives the victory*".

On 3 September 1757 Najib-ud-daulah came to Malharrao's tent, and offered him very heavy bribe in cash (*zar-e-khatir batariq-e-rishwat*) so that the old man could wield his full influence with Raghunathrao and Imad-ul-mulk in allowing him to retire from the city without any molestation. In this way he wanted to carry away all the riches he had collected in the city and from Imad's house†.

Najib retires from Delhi, September 1757

On 3 September Najib-ud-daulah visited Malharrao, agreed to vacate Delhi, resign the office of the Mir Bakhshi and pay the Marathas an indemnity of five lakhs. But he totally rejected the demand for cession to the Marathas of Hardwar and Jawalapur, the religious places of the Hindus. He already knew the Maratha sentiments about Hardwar and so had planted a strong Muslim colony at Jawalapur. He returned to the city in the night. Najib vacated Delhi on 6 September with all his property and war material. His soldiers removed every article of their belongings. All the Rohilla captives were set at liberty. Thus the five-month old Rohilla rule in the capital came to an end. Najib-ud-daulah set up his camp at Wazirabad, 10 kilometres north of Delhi. Raghunathrao granted Najib a *khila'at* of 4 pieces.

Ferries were opened, and grain began to pour into the city. Imad-ul-mulk appointed Ahmad Khan Bangash Mir Bakhshi in place of Najib. Marathas became supreme in the capital. Raghunath received a *khila'at* of six pieces. All the new officials went to Raghunathrao's tent and bowed before him. Antaji Mankeshwar became the new Governor of Delhi province‡.

**SPD*, ii, 77; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 132b–137a; *Ghulam Ali*, i, 33.

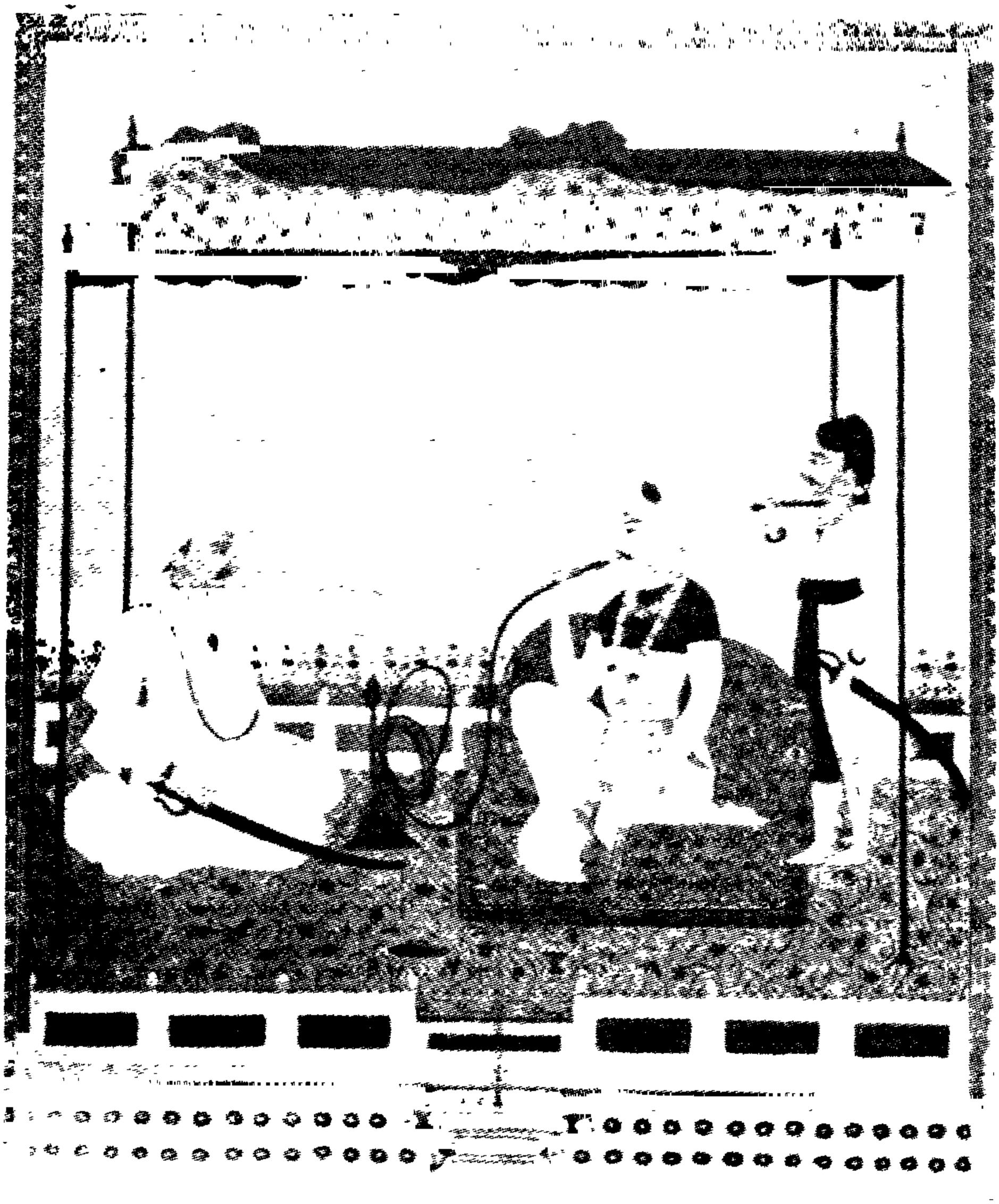
†*Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 126.

‡*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 138a–139a; *Biharilal*, 6; *Najibuddaulah*, lxvii; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 3, 4, 7, 12, 13 September 1757.

تصویر نواب نجیب الدولہ بہادر۔ وام قسبا بقلم حقیر حسنعلی خراسانی

NAJIB-UD-DAULAH

Courtesy: Dr. Ganda Singh



MALHARRAO HOLKAR and PESHWA BAJIRAO I

Courtesy : Phoenix Publications Bombay

Najib does not stop cow-slaughter, September 1757

Peace having been made with the Marathas, Najib-ud-daulah had retired to Wazirabad, 10 kilometres from the city situated on the banks of the Jamuna. The Maratha camp was also located near by. Raghunathrao used to bathe in the Jamuna every morning. His way lay near the camp of Najib-ud-daulah. Cows were slaughtered daily in Najib's camp. Their blood, bones and skins were lying near the route followed by Raghunathrao and other Brahmans who also bathed there. Raghunathrao felt incensed. He asked Malhar to prevail upon Najib to stop cow-slaughter till he was encamped on the Jamuna. Najib replied: "This is a religious matter and I will never abandon it." Raghunathrao declared: "If Najib-ud-daulah will not give it up, tomorrow I shall chastise him*".

Malhar wrote to Najib: "This man (Raghunath) is our master. At the same time we have a compact of friendship with you. If, God forbid, you are harmed I shall be known as the breaker of faith in the whole country. He (Raghunath Rao) is his own master and is very powerful. At this time he has many *Sardars* like me under him and I request you as a favour to me to give up this practice". Najib sent a curt reply challenging Raghunathrao to do whatever he pleased.

Raghunathrao rode out with his army. Najib also got ready to oppose. Malhar interposed all his troops between them. He pleaded to Raghunath not to proceed. Raghunath replied that he was not prepared to listen to anybody's advice. Malhar said: "Your father would have listened to my words. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to follow my advice." Raghunath did not agree. He ordered his army to march and spurred his own horse. Malhar in order to avoid divulgement of his ill-gotten gains held Raghunath's horse by the bridle and said: "You can proceed only after killing me. I will not let you go". Raghunath shouted and cried, but Malhar would not leave the bridle. Raghunath dismounted and with tears in his eyes returned to his tent, deeply resenting the audacity of his senior-most chief. Obviously Malhar had no right to intervene if he could not persuade his adopted 'son' to accede to this little request†.

**Najibuddaulah*, 15–6.

†*Ibid*, 16–7.

Maratha doings in the North, September 1757 to December 1758

Having ousted Najib from Delhi in September 1757, the Marathas set out to the region west of the capital on 18 September 1757. They collected revenues from Kamgar Khan Baluch in Rohtak district through his superintendent Satbhani widow of Sitaram Khazanchi of Kaliana.

As Najib-ud-daulah had been evading payment of five lakhs of indemnity, was defying the new imperial government, and was urging Ahmad Shah Durrani to invade India and crush the Marathas, Raghunath and Malhar entered the Doab on 23 October 1757. They crossed the Hindan on 26 November, and Raghunath bathed in the Ganga at Garhmukteshwar on 2 December 1757. Malhar realized Rs. 20,000 from Baghpat, Rs. 17,000 from Baraut, and entered Saharanpur district, the lands of Najib. Najib sent his family and property across the Ganga, and avoided fighting with his godfather.

Malhar and Ahmad Khan Bangash crossed the Jamuna in the beginning of January 1758. Malhar's women came to Kurukshetra for a religious bath on 9 January 1758(the day of Somavati Amavasa). They were attacked at Shahabad by a contingent of Abdus Samad Khan, Governor of Sarhind. The Maratha guard fought well, slew many Afghans, and seized their horses. On his way back Malharrao plundered Taraori and Karnal and realized a tribute of five lakhs from Kunjpura. He crossed over the Jamuna, met Raghunathrao, and discussed the scheme of conquering the Panjab*.

The Marathas took about a month and a half in maturing plans for the conquest of the Panjab. Towards the end of February 1757, they invaded the Panjab, and stayed there for three months. Leaving some Maratha troops in the Panjab, the main Maratha army under Raghunathrao returned to the Deccan.

Maratha policy in the north reversed, December 1758

Raghunathrao's expedition to the north had brought to the Maratha empire great military and political glory but little financial gain. The Poona court had only one standard measure to evaluate its success. It was in terms of money. From monetary point of view this expedition had proved a complete failure. Not to speak of any

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Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani, 120a, 142b–146a, 147a–150b; *Rajwade,* i, 85.

profit Raghunath had brought a debt of eighty lakhs of rupees.

From the beginning Maratha policy in the north had been determined by Malharrao Holkar and Ranoji Sindhia, who worked together to the north of river Narbada. On Ranoji's death in July 1745 Malhar's voice became supreme. Malhar followed a policy of conciliation and compromise with regard to the Muslims of northern India, though he was ever stiff and stubborn in his dealings with Rajputs, Jats and his own superiors at Poona. He was even responsible for fighting with the Sikhs. Towards the close of 1758 in the north Maratha leadership was changed from Malharrao to Dattaji Sindhia, "a rough, impatient, hustling soldier*".

Dattaji was instructed to achieve two main objectives—to collect tribute as rigorously as he could, and to crush Najib-ud-daulah so that the Marathas could have a clear field in the north. Dattaji completely reversed Malhar's policy. Malhar had always dealt with the Emperor, Wazir and other nobles most leniently and respectfully. He also knew the importance of Najib and showed him every courtesy and consideration.† Dattaji reached Delhi at the end of December 1758. He immediately demanded tribute from the capital on pain of plunder. This threat frightened every body in the city. The Wazir offered 7 or 8 lakhs. Dattaji plundered Luni and the villages round about it. The Wazir protested and came to see Dattaji, but he declined to interview, and spoke of him in contemptuous terms. Dattaji seized the strongest cannon in India called *Attock*. The Marathas ravaged the suburbs of Shahdara. He then sacked Sarai Rohilla and the outside of the Delhi Gate, "where the traders had stored grain and other merchandise beyond calculation‡". He attacked Dasna and seized large supplies of grain and other goods. He also robbed the traders on their way to Delhi from Shahdara and Patparganj. On 31 January 1759 Dattaji's terms were accepted, and on 1 February he left for the Panjab§.

Breach between Dattaji and Najib, May 1759

In the beginning of January 1759 Dattaji, in order to overawe Najib into submission by a mere display of force "detached a large force to the Saharanpur district, which was Najib's *jagir*, ordering

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**Sarkar*, ii, 199.

†*Aitihasik Patren*, 166, 167; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 192b–195a.

‡*Sarkar*, ii, 201.

§*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 197b–198b.

them not to molest any village on the way*". He then went to the Panjab and returned from there in May 1759. He crossed the Jamuna opposite Panipat at Ramra Ghat and encamped at Shamli in the last week of May 1759. Najib-ud-daulah marched from Saharanpur to protect his country from Maratha depredations. Dattaji invited Najib to meet him and settle terms. Najib agreed. Jankoji, Naro Shankar, Antaji Mankeshwar and other Sardars in opposition to Dattaji's wishes planned to capture him. They instructed the guard at the door of his tent to admit Najib alone. But Najib's leading companions numbering about a dozen including Ahmad Khan Afridi, zamindar of Lohari, and two of his brothers brushed aside the resistance of the guard and entered the tent with Najib. Najib grew suspicious and rose immediately to leave. Dattaji did not stop him. The plot had evidently failed. On getting out of the Maratha camp, Najib remarked: "It is not proper to meet these people as I see mischief in their eyes†".

Najib takes up a defensive position at Sukkartal, June 1759

This led to an open breach between Marathas and Najib who now swore to destroy them root and branch. From Shamli Najib retired to his own lands along the banks of the Ganga. The Marathas desolated in one day 1,300 villages‡. Dattaji captured most of Najib's territory, established Maratha military posts at all important places, and advanced in pursuit of Najib. He found himself unable to withstand the Marathas in the open field. "The sagacious Ruhela veteran", says Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "matured a masterly scheme of defence, which enabled his small force to withstand the myriads of Maharashtra for nearly six months and triumph in the end§."

Najib selected a low-lying tract along the bank of the Ganga, about 25 kilometres due east of Muzaffarnagar, known as Sukkartal. It was fairly large in area which could easily accommodate about 30,000 people. The region contained numerous deep and dry ravines with high banks and sandy beds. It was covered all over with thorny bushes and wild trees. The whole area was defended on the north by a running stream falling into the Ganga called Satani. On the east there was the mighty Ganga. On the south and west deep trenches were dug and on their high mounds cannon were mounted. The

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**Sarkar*, ii, 201.

†*Najibuddaulah*, 20–1; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 208b; *Shejwalkar*, 16.

‡*Mir Ki Ap Biti*, 125.

§*Sarkar*, ii, 205. Cf. *Husain Shahi*, 47–9; *Tazkirah-e-Shakir Khan*, 96.

whole land was most suitable for infantry manoeuvres, and absolutely unfit for cavalry charges. Water was available in plenty. The supply of food was assured by a bridge of boats thrown by Najib across the Ganga, as the lands on the opposite bank belonged to Rohillas. Thus Najib converted this rough and uneven land into an impregnable fortress. Dattaji entrenched himself 4 kilometres west of Sukkartal near the village of Miranpur belonging to friendly Sayyids. Skirmishes began between the rivals on a small scale owing to the rainy season, but towards its close one sharp battle was fought.*

Maratha assault repulsed, 15 September 1759

It was 15 September 1759 and the rainy season was not fully over. The ground was dry but soft. Rohillas against Najib's instructions went too far into the Maratha lines. Marathas pushed them back and pursued them. Dattaji formed a plan to charge them from another direction. He advanced with 7,000 chosen horse. Najib saw the dust rising from two directions. He knew which side his men had gone away, and they could return the same way. He smelt danger from the other side. He immediately rushed 10,000 infantry with loaded guns in that direction. They lay prostrate in the dry beds and under the high banks of the ravines beyond the trenches of his camp. Rohilla skirmishers pursued by Marathas were running back into their camp. Dattaji saw them, and galloped towards them. At this moment heavy guns from high mounds were directed upon them. Under effect of sharp and effective Rohilla fire Dattaji turned towards the dry nullahs where Najib's men lay in ambush. As directed by Najib 2,000 Rohillas turn by turn discharged their muskets upon Dattaji's men. Marathas were brought down their horses instantly, and many horses were killed. A Rohilla seized the reins of Jankoji's horse with one hand and attacked him with a sword by another. The Rohilla was cut down, but Jankoji's arm was severely wounded. The contingent of the Sayyids of Barha, allies of the Marathas, was almost totally destroyed. Dattaji lost 500 Marathas and many horses. Najib's loss was 50 killed and 100 wounded. "From that day the Marathas discontinued skirmishes"†.

**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 210–3; *SPD*, xxix, 56; *Rajwade*, i, 142-6; *N.W.P. Gazetteer*, iii, 444–6, 641–2; *Biharilal*, 4–5; *Husain Shahi*, 47; *Najibuddaulah*, 21-2.

†*Najibuddaulah*, 22–4.

Failure of Govind Bundele's incursion into Rohilkhand, October-November 1759

From Sukkartal Najib frequently wrote to his Afghan brethren of Rohilkhand and to Shuja-ud-daulah of Avadh saying that "the Marathas had attacked him and as he alone could not stand against them they should join him*". When the siege had continued for some months he urged them: "I am reduced to great straits. I have been engaged in fighting the Marathas for six months, but not one of you have come to my help. Sure enough a similar day (of trouble) awaits you†".

These appeals and pleadings had the desired effect. Though the Rohillas and Shuja did not join him in the fighting, yet they maintained regular supplies to his camp over the bridge which Najib had thrown earlier. Marathas had planned to cut off his supplies, but could not do so. As usual with them, they had come to the north penniless. Hence they could not procure boats. The rains had stopped by the end of September, but the river was still unfordable.

Najib had founded a new city at the village of Shanpur to the east of the Ganga about 30 kilometres from the hills. It was named Najibabad. Families of Najib and his chiefs resided there. Dattaji planned to attack this town in order to drive out Najib and his men from Sukkartal.

Dattaji selected Govind Ballal Bundele for this task. He was given 10,000 cavalry. A ford 50 kilometres north of Sukkartal was pointed out by a Gujar zamindar. Govind crossed the Ganga about 20 October 1759. The Rohilla chiefs, Dunde Khan, father-in-law of Najib, Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Sadullah Khan and others at the head of their forces came to Najibabad to give battle to Govind Bundele. The Maratha general passed by the city without any fighting, and turned towards the bridge on the Ganga by which supplies poured into Najib's camp. In this object he was thwarted by Shuja-ud-daulah's generals Umraogiri and Anupgiri Gosain about 3 November 1759. Some Marathas were killed, but most of them fled away. In a hurry they entered the river at the wrong ford and many were drowned‡.

**Najibuddaulah*, 21–2.

†*Ibid*, 24.

‡*Shakir*, 98; *Najibuddaulah*, 24–6; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 210b; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 171–4; *Rajwade*, i, 40–43; *SPD*, xl, 126; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 88–9.

Dattaji raises siege in disgust, December 1759

Early in November 1759, rumours became thick that the Durrani had entered the Panjab. On 8 November Dattaji was joined by Sabaji and Tukoji from the Panjab and supplied him details of the Afghan invasion. Dattaji raised the siege at Sukkartal on 8 December 1759 and hastened to the Panjab to check the progress of the Durrani.

Najib came out of Sukkartal on 16 December, and advanced towards the Jamuna to welcome his master, Ahmad Shah Durrani.*

Najibuddaulah, 27; *Sarkar*, ii, 211–2, 215–6; *Shakir*, 99.

CHAPTER X

MARATHA — DURRANI CONFLICT

Durrani suppresses rebellions at home, 1757-9

On his return to Afghanistan in May 1757, Ahmad Shah Durrani was involved into certain internal troubles, and could not turn his immediate attention to the Panjab. Nasir Khan, chief of Qalat in Baluchistan and head of the Brahui tribe, declared his independence after the expulsion of Timur Shah and Jahan Khan from the Panjab. Ahmad Shah despatched a force under Shah Vali Khan which was repulsed. The Durrani hurried to help his Wazir. Nasir Khan was defeated in an open engagement. He took shelter in the fort of Qalat which was besieged. Nasir Khan eventually submitted. Another rebellion of Mir Khush Durrani, a relation of Ahmad Shah Durrani, was easily suppressed later on. Darwesh Ali of Herat was also crushed.*

Role of Shah Waliullah of Delhi

At this time a strong movement was going on among the Muslims to retain the whole of northern India under Muslim rule. In the first instance the Mughal power was to be preserved as far as possible with the help of the Muslims only. The Rajput assistance could be tolerated, as they had given proof of their loyalty and devotion under the Great Mughals. Marathas, Jats and the Sikhs were all rebels, and must be crushed. In case the Mughal Emperors displayed no vigour and vitality, and failed to unite all the Muslim forces, then Ahmad Shah Durrani should be invited to assume sovereignty of India. If the Durrani was also unwilling to settle in India, then the leadership of Indian Muslims was to be entrusted to Najib-ud-daulah. In any case the Delhi Empire was to be saved from falling into the hands of Marathas, Jats or the Sikhs. This movement was headed by a Muslim scholar and theologian named Shah Waliullah.

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*Elphinstone, *Caubul*, 290–1; Pottinger's *Travels*, 280–3, 294; *Malleson*, 284-7; *Ferrier*, 84–5; Shahamat Ali, *History of Bahawalpur*, 43–5.

Shah Waliullah was the son of Shah Abdur Rahim, a Sufi scholar, who flourished in the reign of Aurangzeb. He had assisted the Emperor in the compilation of '*Fatwa-e-Alamgiri*', a standard and authentic code of Islamic law. At Delhi he founded an institution to impart instruction in Islamic lore and learning, known after his own name as *Madrasah-e-Rahimyah*. He devoted all his time and energy to the service of this academy.

Shah Waliullah was born in 1703. He was taught by his father. At the age of sixteen he became a teacher in the *Madrasah* where he served for 12 years. Then he went to Mecca and Medina. He stayed there for over a year, and studied with the founder of Wahabism as a class-fellow. He was thus fired with great zeal and enthusiasm to revive Muslim power in India.* He came back to Delhi on 9 July 1732, and resumed his old work. He imparted sound knowledge of Islamic religion and culture to his students, and then sent them out to various places to set up free schools in mosques and spread Islam.†

According to Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, "Shah Waliullah's immediate problem was the rising tide of the Maratha and Jat aggressions".‡ Thus the revival of Islam in the first place meant suppression of the Marathas and Jats as well as of the Sikhs§. For this purpose the Shah looked up to "Nizam-ul-Mulk, Najib-ud-Daulah and Ahmad Shah Abdali".¶ He pressed Nizam-ul-mulk "to wage war against the Marathas".‖ He advised Emperor Muhammad Shah: "The Jat strongholds should be brought under control and a lesson should be taught to the miscreants so that there may be no recrudescence of such disturbances".⸸ Shah Waliullah "repeatedly wrote to the leading dignitaries of the day and urged them to do their duty".≠

The Nizam-ul-mulk and Emperor Muhammad Shah both died in 1748. Emperor Ahmad Shah and Alamgir II had no capacity

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**Pakistan's History of the Freedom Movement*, i, 493.

†*Ibid*, 494.

‡*Ibid*, 539.

§Shah Waliullah's son was Shah Abdul Aziz, whose pupil Sayyid Ahmad Brelvi carried *Jehad* against Ranjit Singh. [*Ibid*, 508.]

¶*Ibid*, 495.

‖*Ibid*, 516–7, also f.n. 1 on p. 517. See also Shah Waliullah Dehlawi ke *Siyasi Maktubat*, 80–1.

⸸*Ibid*, 522.

≠*Ibid*, 495.

for leadership. The only other Muslim powers in the north were the Rohilla Afghans and Nawabs of Avadh. The latter being Shia were out of question. The Shah naturally favoured the former whom he considered "the healthiest elements in the social and political life of the Muslims*".

Of all the Rohilla chiefs Najib-ud-daulah had very close connection with his *Madrasah*. Here Najib supported no lessthan 500 scholars and teachers each of whom was provided with a stipend ranging from Rs. 5 to Rs. 500 per mensem†. Besides, Najib was certainly the most powerful and the ablest. Shah Waliullah "encouraged him, guided him, blessed him and inspired him"‡. He wrote to him: "I clearly see that the regeneration of the *millat* depends upon you"§. In another letter he wrote to Najib: "There are three groups in India, known for their severity and harshness—as long as these three groups are not extirpated the Emperor will not have peace, nor would the nobles and the people¶."

When the Marathas conquered the Panjab and extended their sway to the Khaibar Pass, Shah Waliullah became furious and frustrated. He had the vision to see the end of the Muslim power in India in consequence of it. He knew that the Muslim rule in India had lasted for so many centuries due to importation of fresh blood from the north-west. There was not even one Muslim dynasty of purely Indian origin which had ruled at Delhi. The occupation of Attock and Peshawar by Marathas was the severest blow in this direction. He therefore sounded the clarion call of the death knell of Muslim political supremacy. The only way to save Islam in India in his view was to crush the Marathas.

The contemplative scholar also understood that the Marathas were a foolhardy people. They planned boldly, executed intrepidly, but consolidated poorly. Shah Waliullah had just become a teacher of theology in Delhi when the Marathas visited it for the first time under Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath. Since then he had attentively watched the Maratha penetration into the north, as well as the main trends of their policy and character. He had clearly seen that the

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**Ibid*, 528, *f.n.* 4.
†*Ibid*, 123, f.n. 2. see *Malfuzat*, 81; *Siyasi Maktubat*, 202.
‡*Ibid*, 530; see *Siyasi Maktubat*, 58–69.
§*Ibid*, 529–30; see *Siyasi Maktubat*, 67.
¶*Ibid*, 530; See *Siyasi Maktubat*, 61.

Marathas were the victims of the same old disease from which Hinduism had suffered throughout the ages. It was the Hindu's instinctive greed for money, and his natural tendency for mutual dissension that had always stood in his way for consolidation. The Marathas were demanding gold, and nothing but gold, from Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike. This naturally brought them into ill-repute and they were hated by all except the temple priests whom they patronized. The Peshwa took little interest in north Indian affairs which he had entrusted to Sindhias and Holkars who seldom worked in unison. The Peshwa's two agents in Delhi, Antaji Mankeshwar and Hinganes, were rarely in accord and harmony.

Obviously to an intellectual of the calibre of Shah Waliullah who had seen these things for himself, it was not a difficult task to extirpate the Marathas in the north. This object could not be achieved by Najib-ud-daulah alone. As usual outside help was again to be sought from across the Sulaiman mountains. So he turned to Ahmad Shah Durrani, who was deeply detested by the people of Delhi, both Hindus and Muslims alike, and yet he was the only foreign Muslim strong enough to deliver them from the domination of the infidels. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami writes: "He decided to invite Ahmad Shah Abdali to India. He wrote a detailed letter to Ahmad Shah, apprised him of the political developments in the country and then requested him to relieve the Muslims from the Maratha domination. This letter is one of the most important historical documents of the eighteenth century. In this letter he gave a brief history of the causes of the weakening of Muslim power in the sub-continent. He traces the rise of the Marathas and the Jats. In spite of the vast territories which they had occupied Shah Walliullah was certain that it would not be too difficult to defeat the Marathas and to break their power. The Jats had grown into a power because of the indifference and indolence of Muslim officers and could be easily suppressed. He then sums up the plight of the Muslims in these words: 'In short the plight of the Muslims is pitiable. All control of the machinery of government is in the hands of the Hindus.....All wealth and prosperity is to be found in their houses while there is nothing for the Muslims but poverty and misery'. In the end he exhorts Ahmad Shah Abdali to come to the rescue of the Muslims because it was his duty to do so as the most powerful Muslim monarch in that region. Shah Waliullah was successful in persuading the Afghan monarch to undertake the task of crushing the Marathas

and he began to prepare the public for his invasion.....The Battle of Panipat was a turning point in the history of this sub-continent and Shah Waliullah was the chief agent in bringing it about*".

Najib urges Durrani to punish Marathas, 1758

While leaving India in April 1757, Ahmad Shah Durrani had appointed Najib-ud-daulah Mir Bakhshi of the Mughal Empire, and his own plenipotentiary at Delhi. He was expelled from the capital by Imad-ul-mulk and Marathas in September 1757. Since then he commenced pressing the Durrani to crush the Maratha power. He wrote: "All these troubles have been inflicted upon all our men by the hands of the infidel Marathas. You are the Emperor of the Muslmans and you should, therefore, take steps to put a stop (to this high handedness)". Ahmad Shah replied: "This year I am occupied with the affairs of this country, for one side Nasir Khan Baluch has revolted, and on the other Darwesh Ali Hirati has rebelled. God willing, after I am free from these pre-occupations, I shall intercede in this matter†".

Najib also aimed at winning over the trans-Ganga Rohillas to his cause. He wrote to them: "The Marathas have ruined the honour of the (people) of Hindustan. No one dares face them. Gird up your loins and for once unite. I will take the lead in this matter. The Wazir of the Emperor at Shahjahanabad is an ally of the Marathas. Rajas of old standing, who are zamindars, chieftains and commanders of armies, have acknowledged the suzerainty of the Marathas and pay them annual tribute. The only independent territory left is that of the trans-Gangetic plain and the Doab. The moment I am expelled from the Doab, then your turn and that of Shuja-ud-daulah would come. When I am defeated, you will be able to do nothing". The Rohillas showed reluctance to join Najib. He thereupon took written undertaking that they would join Ahmad Shah Durrani in extirpating the Marathas. He sent all these papers to Qandhar to assure the Durrani that all the Afghans in India would join him‡".

On having taken up the defensive position at Sukkartal towards the close of June 1759, "Najib-ud-daulah dispatched messengers to the Shah every month§". He wrote: "In the hope of getting your

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**Ibid*, 531–2. (*Siyasi Maktubat*, 45-53.)
†*Najibuddaulah*, 17–8.
‡*Ibid*, 18–9.
§*Ibid*, 21; Khazanah-e-Amirah, 101.

help I shall have fallen into the hands of the Maratha infidels. It is very likely that very soon the Afghans would be exterminated in spite of there being an Afghan Emperor. So long as I am alive, I will not hesitate from risking my life and killing the infidels*".

The Durrani was also invited by Emperor Alamgir II who wanted to get out of the clutches of Wazir Imad-ul-mulk. He wrote: "Imad-ul-mulk is thinking of killing me. If Your Majesty come to this side, I may be saved from the hand of this tyrant, otherwise there this is no possibility of safety either for me or for my sons†".

Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur and Bijay Singh of Jodhpur also complained to Ahmad Shah against the Marathas‡.

Ahmad Shah gets ready to invade India, July-August 1759

By the middle of 1759 Ahmad Shah was free from internal troubles, and to direct his attention towards India. He sent his messengers all over Afghanistan inviting men of dash and daring to join him in a religious war (*jehad*). He also wrote to all his chiefs to get ready to accompany him. He did not want to leave any *Sardar* of note behind for fear of rebellion in his absence. Out of the three strongest urges of man—woman, gold and land [*zan, zar, zamin*] the first two could be had in India in plenty. Hence every Afghan of some mettle readily responded to his call.

The Durrani possessed full information about the disposition of Maratha troops in the Panjab. Their main military posts were located at Peshawar, Attock, Rohtas, Lahore, Multan and Sarhind. He decided to penetrate into the Panjab from two directions, from the north through the Khaibar Pass, and from the south via Bolan Pass. His advance guard under Jahan Khan was to follow the Khaibar route. He himself would march by the southern road. The main object was to take Nasir Khan Baluch of Qalat with him to India. Besides Multan was situated on this route. After defeating the Marathas there he was to meet Jahan Khan at Lahore.

Durrani reaches Lahore, November 1759

The Durrani and Jahan Khan left Qandhar in the beginning of September 1759. Ahmad Shah commanded about 40,000§ horse.

**Najibuddaulah*, 24.

†*Tarikh-e-Bad Nadiriya*, 124.

‡*Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 101; *Muzaffari*, 175; *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 1945, p. 259.

§*Imad-us-Saadat*, 116a; SPD, xxvii, 246; and 55,000 according to a Marathi letter dated 1–11–1759 in Rajwade, i, 139.

Jahan Khan had about 20,000 men with him. On the approach of Ahmad Shah Durrani towards Multan the Maratha Governor with all his troops fled to Lahore. Though saved from the fanaticism of the Afghans, they fell a victim to the fury of the peasantry of the Jalandhar Doab, and most of them were cut to pieces. "Behind were 3,000 horse and 3,000 foot near Multan. They came safely to this side of Lahore. In the Doab (Jalandhar) the *gawars* (villagers) have united and made rows. When some of our men had crossed the Satluj and some were still on the farther bank, they fought and took away 4,000 camels, each worth Rs. 40, looted *mohars* (gold coins) and rupees. Five hundred men naked from the waist upward came yesterday on foot. One thousand horses, large and small, have come; all the rest have been given up to plunder. A great disaster has befallen us*".

On the northern side Sabaji vacated Peshawar without offering any resistance. He joined Tukoji at Attock. "Here a short engagement took place between Sabaji and the Afghan advance-guard, and the Marathas fled towards Lahore†". Jahan Khan pursued them to Rohtas. They joined Bapurao. At this place they made a show of some opposition, and then fled away. At Lahore Naro Shankar and Narsoji Pandit took to their heels. Narayanrao at Sarhind followed suit. The Marathas from Lahore went to Amritsar, Batala, Jalandhar and Sarhind, thus avoiding the direct road between Lahore and Sarhind.‡

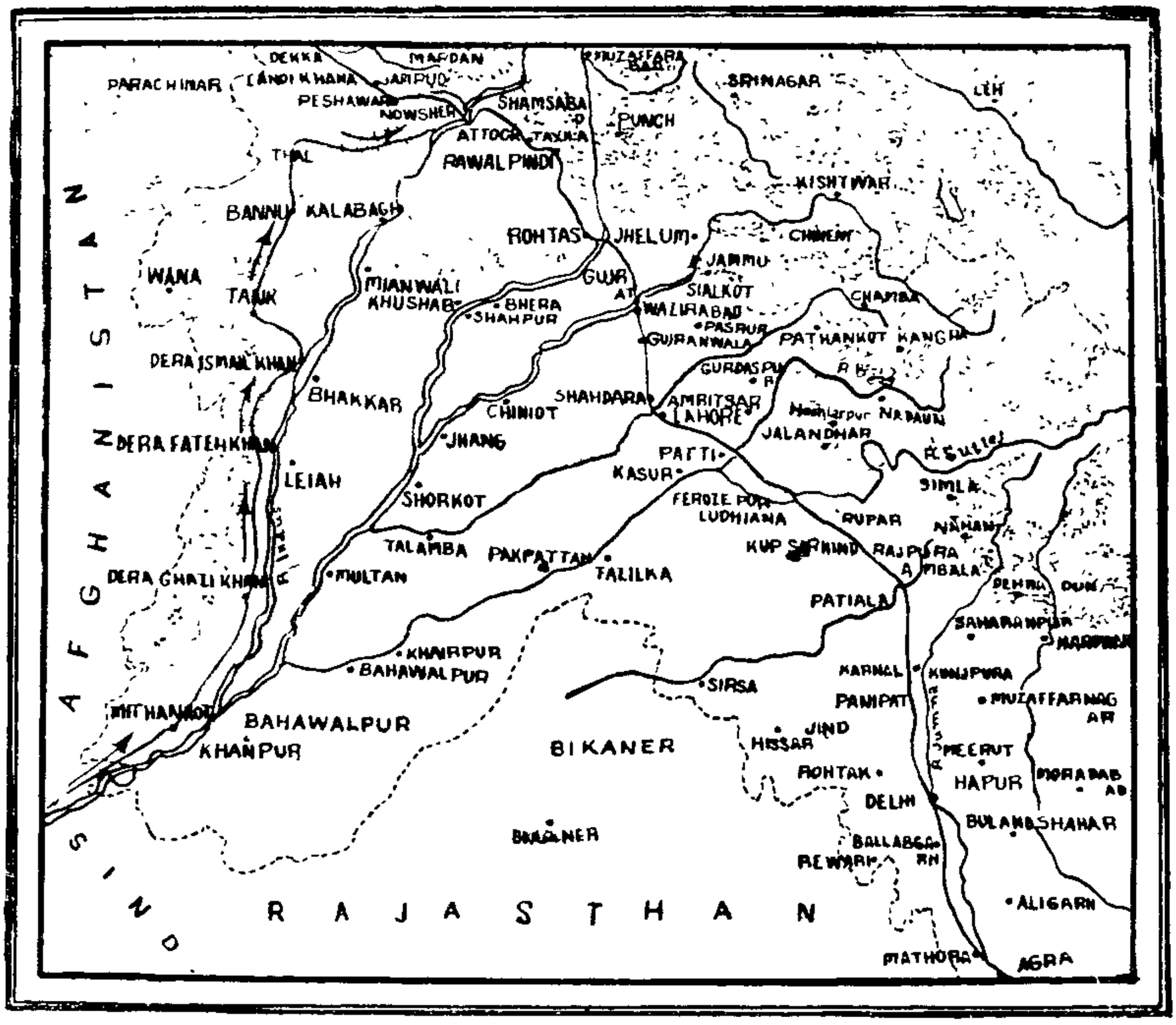
Some aspects of Indian history present a sad spectacle. All of its decisive battles have been fought far into the interior, nearly 900 kilometres away from the Khaibar Pass. The government which could not guard the country's frontiers, and which allowed the invader to cover such a long distance unimpeded had no right to exist. On this occasion the Marathas were not taken unawares. They knew that a fresh Durrani invasion was as sure as death. They had about two years and a half to make preparations. Was it not a criminal negligence on their part to ignore the defence of their frontiers?

**Rajwade*, i, 146. These soldiers reached Dattaji's camp at Sukkartal on 23 November 1759; *Sarkar*, ii, 216.

Shejwalkar on p. 17 states that the body of these Marathas "had come up to Firozepur on the Satluj, where it was overtaken by a party of the Afghans who cut to pieces".

†*Siyar-ul-Mutakharin*, Urdu, iii, 64; *Husain Shahi*, 47.
Miskin, 202.

‡*Rajwade*, i, 139 141, 142, 143, 146; *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 397–8, 402.



To illustrate Durrani invasions

Resuming the thread of the narrative of the march of Ahmad Shah Durrani, we find him unable to cross the Indus and thus advancing up the river Indus across Derajat and Bannu, where he was joined by two local chiefs, Begu and Khan Zaman. It may be pointed out that Ahmad Shah Durrani's march into India resembled a great river. Its volume goes on increasing as numerous streams and rivulets go on joining it till it falls into the sea. Similarly Ahmad Shah's army went on swelling right up to the time of the battle. Ahmad Shah crossed the Indus on 25 October 1759*. Slaying Maratha stragglers here and there, Jahan Khan and the Durrani approached Lahore: "Jahan Khan, quite unopposed, arrived at Wazirabad and dispersed his troops on all sides (to raid). Lahore was without a ruler. Jahan Khan despatched 3 or 4 men to Surat Singh Khatri of Lahore with a letter to strike coins and read the *khutba* in the name of Timur Shah, the son of Ahmad Shah Durrani, and issue a proclamation warning all people not to oppress one another. Sabaji, finding himself unsafe at Batala, came to Jalandhar. These events caused a consternation and fright in Sarhind†". One Maratha general and several soldiers lingering in the vicinity of Lahore were cut to pieces by the Durrani vanguard‡.

The Sikhs did not fail in their national duty, in which the Marathas had so miserably acquitted themselves. Even in the face of heavy odds they did not allow the invaders to pass through their country without striking a blow, as is testified by a Marathi letter which runs:—"Abdali has come to Lahore and fought a great battle with the Sikhs; 2,000 Abdali troops were slain and Jahan Khan was wounded§".

Wazir murders Emperor Alamgir II, November 1759

Wazir Imad-ul-mulk hated Emperor Alamgir II who was one of the invitees of Ahmad Shah Durrani. Now the Afghan monarch was in India, and was fast advancing towards Delhi. At this time a few letters addressed by Emperor to Shuja-ud-daulah and the Durrani were intercepted from messengers by Imad's men. Imad was infuriated and at once planned to murder the Emperor. On 29 November 1759 he was told that a great saint had arrived in Delhi

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**Malleson*, 287; *Bannu District Gazetteer*, 124–6; *Ganda Singh*, 226.

†*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 397.

‡*Ibid;* S*iyar*, iii, 64; *Sarkar*, ii, 80.

§*Rajwa de*, i, 146.

and was staying at Kohtila. The Emperor was induced to see him. On 29 November 1759 the old fogy immediately got ready. No sooner did he enter a chamber of the Kohtila than he was beheaded. His dead body stripped of all ornaments and clothing was thrown on the sandy bed of the Jamuna. He was buried at midnight in Humayun's tomb.

On 30 November 1759, a royal prince was declared new Emperor under the title of Shah Jahan II. On the same day the former Wazir Intizam-ud-daulah and his companion Lutfullah Beg were strangled to death, and their corpses tied with heavy stones were thrown into the river Jamuna*.

The Durrani marches towards Delhi, November 1759

Ahmad Shah Durrani appointed Jarchi Karimdad Khan, nephew of Wazir Shah Vali Khan governor of the Panjab. Amir Khan was to serve him as a deputy. Zain Khan was given charge of the Chahar Mahal of Aurangabad, Gujrat, Pasrur and Sialkot. Raja Ghamand Chand of Kangra was appointed governor of the Jalandhar Doab as well as the hill country lying between the Ravi and the Satluj†.

With Jahan Khan ahead, the Shah moved from Lahore by slow marches. He crossed the Bias at the ferry of Goindwal on 20 November 1759. On 10 December 1759 he was at Khizarabad near Rupar, and from there he entered Sarhind where Jahan Khan had reached on 27 November 1759. Ahmad Shah was at Ambala on 20 December and at Taraori, 13 kilometres north of Karnal, on 24 December 1759. There the Durrani soldiers were supplied with scarlet caps prepared by the Afghans of Kunjpura under instructions from Najib Khan‡".

Battle of Taraori, 24 December 1759

On the approach of the Shah, Dattaji had raised the siege of Sukkartal on 8 December 1759. Passing through the district of Muzaffarnagar and Barha Sadat territory, he arrived at the Jamuna. Here he despatched his family, sick and wounded persons, stores and heavy equippage under Ruparam Kothari to Delhi. He crossed the

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**Delhi Chronicle*, 166–7; *Miskin*, 200–2; *Husain Shahi*, 46; *Siyar*, iii, 62–3; SPD, xxvii, 245; *Khair-ud-din*, 55; *Dar-ul-Hakumat* Delhi, 661; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 911.

†*Ali-ud-din*, 119b–120a; *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1908), *Punjab*, i, 357; *Sohanlal*, 147; *Kanhyalal*, 82.

‡*SPD*, ii, 109, 111, 112, 117; xxi, 178; *Biharilal*, 5.

Jamuna south of Kunjpura at the Andhera Ghat on 18 December 1759. At Kunjpura he finalised his plans in two days. He divided his army into two parts. The best 25,000 troops were retained under himself. They were lightly equipped, and were ready to march against the Durrani. The other troops under Jankoji and Imad-ul-mulk were kept 30 kilometres in the rear towards Delhi. They were to give support to the main body in an emergency, and in the case of a disaster were to escape towards the capital. His scouts brought intelligence that the main Durrani army lay encamped at Chhat, Banur and Lalru to the north of Ambala.

On 22 December Dattaji proceeded towards Kurukshetra and sent Jankoji and Imad-ul-mulk to Karnal. The Maratha advance-guard of 5,000 was under Bhoite with 1,000 Mughalia troops of the Wazir. The Durrani advance-guard was hidden behind numerous small bodies of skirmishers in batches of 100 each. Bhoite came into clash with one Afghan party of scouts near Taraori, and routed it. They fled backward, and Marathas and Mughalias pursued them. Just then Ahmad Shah ordered Shah Pasand Khan with 5,000 troops to advance. The Mughalia soldiers of Imad on seeing the flag of Shah Pasand Khan were terrified and quietly slipped away. Bhoite also fled away giving up 400 of his men to slaughter. Their heads were cut off and taken to the Durrani. Then Dattaji came upon the scene. On seeing numerous headless trunks scattered about all over, he hurriedly retired 30 kilometres away from the place. Durrani forded the Jamuna in the night at Buriya Ghat and was joined by Najib at Saharanpur. The Shah marched along the eastern bank of the Jamuna under guidance of Najib to Delhi.*

The Durrani Wazir, Shah Vali Khan, in a letter written to Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur stated that an engagement took place between the Afghans and Marathas on the bank of the Jamuna on 29 December 1759. The Marathas were supported by Imad-ul-mulk and Bahadur Khan Baluch. This engagement is not mentioned anywhere else†.

**SPD*, ii, 109, 111, 112; xxi, 178; *Rajwade*, i, 147, 150; *Husain Shahi*, 49–50; *Najibuddaulah*, 28–9; *Sarkar*, ii, 217–9. Ahmad Shah Durrani in a letter written to Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur stated that he had defeated a body of 20,000 Marathas under Jankoji and Imad-ul-mulk on 22 December 1759. [Letter No. 12, ff. 31 b, 32a-b in the *Proceedings of Indian History Congress* 8th session, 1945, p. 264.]

†Letter 13, ff 41a–42b in the *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 8th session, 1945, pp. 264-5.

Dattaji slain at Barari Ghat, 9 January 1760

After the battle of Taraori on 24 December 1759, Dattaji returned to his base at Kunjpura. Next morning he came to know that the Durrani had crossed the Jamuna, and that under Najib's guidance was marching to Delhi. Dattaji decided to save the capital from falling into the hands of the Afghans and Rohillas. He sent Wazir Imad-ul-mulk to the city to organise its defences. The cowardly and treacherous minister deserted the Marathas, and took shelter with Surajmal Jat.

Dattaji wound up his camp at Kunjpura on 27 December 1759, and reached Sonepat on 29 December 1759. He stayed at Sonepat for five days to get exact information about the Durrani movements. The whole country on the opposite side of the river was under Najib. His Afghan officers even of the lowest rank had such a hold on all the villages situated along the eastern bank of the Jamuna and inhabited mostly by Hindus that none durst send any intimation to the Marathas. Besides Ahmad Shah Durrani was most strict in keeping his whereabout secret. His method was to slay every Indian found moving outside his home. His vanguard was always surrounded by a screen of numerous small parties all around at a distance of 7 or 8 kilometres. While on march or scouting his men were on the move from soon after midnight to early morning. The cold weather being at its height there was thick fog in the morning and evening. The Maratha "excesses had made the peasantry their enemies, and they were usually deficient in regard to intelligence*".

Dattaji posted his men at all the fords on the Jamuna. Sabaji Patel with 700 men was at Barari Ghat. Dattaji visited Delhi on 5 January and sent all the families in his camp together with surplus goods to Rewari†. Dattaji with his army encamped at Barari 16 kilometres north of Delhi on 4 January 1760.

Meanwhile Ahmad Shah had been united with all the trans-Ganga Rohilla chiefs such as Sadullah Khan, Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Dunde Khan and Mulla Sardar. He encamped 10 kilometres north of Delhi.

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*Grant Duff i, 604.

†The rearguard of the retreating Maratha camp "plundered the shrine of Nizam-ud-din Auliya and carried off some rich men of the city for ransom,—thus making a last grab at the capital before abandoning it to the foreign invader." *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 8–1–1760; *Sarkar*, ii, 250, f.n.

The Panjab rivers are at their lowest from December to March. The bed of the Jamuna at Barari had dried up in the middle leaving a large island between two channels.* This island was full of reeds often as tall as three metres and very thick as well as of jhau bushes. The larger and deeper current of water was to the east and shallow stream to the west. The Durrani decided to cross the Jamuna at Barari Ghat. It appears that Dattaji's movements also were unknown to the Durrani, otherwise he would not have decided to cross the river in the face of main Maratha force.

Najib with his own men was ahead, while the Durrani was to follow him. Najib was preceded by heavy guns tied to each side of the elephants. They started crossing the bigger channel after midnight between 8 and 9 January 1760 in the light of the moon. Sabaji and his men must be snoring buried under heavy quilts in the bitterly cold night when uncovered hands and feet usually refuse to work. The Marathas sighted Najib's Rohillas led by Qutab Shah "about three hours after daybreak"†(10-30 a.m.), when they had crossed the wider stream and the whole island.

Sabaji rushed through the shallow channel and attacked them. But his devoted heroism could make no headway against the dogged, obstinate resistance of the Rohilla infantry armed with rifles and muskets. Most of his horsemen armed with swords and spears were killed. Then Dattaji appeared on the scene, and with himself in the forefront fell upon the Rohillas. His superb, magnificent and inspiring dash was verily worth one's whole life to see. He pushed back the Rohillas. The Rohilla infantrymen lying concealed in the tall reeds and jhau bushes rained deadly bullets incessantly upon him. Dattaji was struck in the ribs and he instantly fell dead. His brother Jotiba was also killed. Dattaji was well-known to all the Rohilla chiefs. Qutab Shah Rohilla cut off his head and sent it to Najib who passed it on to the Durrani. The Marathas removed his headless corpse to the edge of the water to carry it across the shallow channel. Just at this moment Jankoji and Mahadji arrived with their reserves. But the Maratha spears were utterly useless against musketry fire of the Durranis who had reached the battlefield. Jankoji fought bravely, but he received a bullet wound in the upper part of

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*Its bed varies from half a kilometre to one kilometre in width, of which the stream occupies only a few hundred metres in cold weather. [*Imperial Gazetteer, Punjab*, i, 302].

†Sarkar, ii, 222.

his arm. His men dragged him out of the field. The Marathas leaving Dattaji's corpse behind fled away towards Delhi. They were hotly pursued by Rohillas and Afghans even beyond the capital for a distance of 30 kilometres or so, and large numbers of them were cut down*.

Jankoji and Malhar join at Kot Putli, 15 January 1760

Dattaji's prudence in sending families and heavy baggage to Rewari bore the desired fruit. Jankoji in his flight overtook them when they were out of danger. He stopped at Paniala, 150 kilometers south-west of Delhi to rally his men, on 14 January 1760. The following day he was joined at Kot Putli, 8 kilometres south of Paniala, by Malharrao Holkar from Rajasthan. All the non-combatants and unnecessary material were sent to Poona under Govind Bundele on 23 January 1760. On 3 February 1760 in Malwa Dattaji's 16 year old widow Bhagirathibai gave birth to a son who died soon afterwards.

Being free from encumbrances they decided to resort to guerilla warfare. It was essential for them to know about the Durrani movements in order to shape their future policy on the arrival of the main Maratha army from the Deccan. They also wanted to cut off the Afghan supply of money and material. Jankoji being young and inexperienced, Malhar above 75 years old took the leadership of Maratha cavalry. They left for Delhi on 24 January 1760†.

Malhar routed near Sikandarabad, 4 March 1760

Having won a victory over Dattaji on 9 January 1760, Ahmad Shah Durrani entered the Delhi fort. His soldiers plundered the city for many days. On 21 January "a foraging party from his camp went to the old city and Paharganj, and carried away the beams and planks of the houses for firewood‡". The Shah did not make any change in kingship, but appointed Yaqub Ali Khan a cousin of Wazir Shah Vali Khan, his Governor of the Imperial capital§.

**SPD*, ii, 114; xxi, 181, 182, 185; xxvii, 247; *Rajwade*, i, 153, 156, 165; ii, p. 154 contains a list of the slain; iii, 516; *Khazanah-e-*Amirah, 102; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 176-7; *Shakir*, 99; *Husain Shahi*, 50–1; *Najibuddaulah*, 30–1; *Siyar*, iii, 65; *Miskin*, 202–3; *Zikar-e-Mir*, 84; *Mir ki Ap Biti*, 121; *Grant Duff*, i, 604; *Sarkar, ii*, 220–4.

†*SPD*, ii, 114; xxi, 181; *Rajwade*, i, 153, 156, 162; *Shakir*, 100; *Shejwalkar*, 25, 27.

‡*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 21–1–1760.; *Sarkar*, ii, 251.

§*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 1–2–1760; *Husain Shahi*, 51; *Miskin*, 208.

The Durrani left Delhi on 27 January, marched against Surajmal on 3 February and beséiged Dig on 7 February. From here he despatched a strong force under Malikah-e-Zamani, Abdul Ahad Khan, and Najib's brother Sultan Khan, which routed one party of the Marathas on 11 February 1760*. The Shah learnt that Malharrao was at Narnaul, 130 kilometres south-west of Delhi. He immediately marched in that direction. He reached Rewari, 80 kilometres south-west of Delhi on 18 February. Malhar easily succeeded in giving him a slip. The Shah advanced 13 kilometres towards Delhi, but the Marathas again evaded him. Malhar came to Bahadurgarh, 64 kilometres north of Rewari and 30 kilometres west of Delhi on 22 February. On 24 February the Marathas appeared at Kalkaji near the capital. Learning that the Shah was pursuing them, they crossed the Jamuna on 26–7 February and entered the Doab with a view to desolate Najib's lands and to intercept Najib's treasure of ten lakhs on its way to the Afghan camp under escort of the troops of Ahmad Khan Bangash. The Durrani arrived at Delhi on 29 February, and his men again "slew and plundered the people of Delhi to an extreme". Malharrao reached Sikandarabad on 28 February and completely looted the town, on the Holi day, *i.e.* 1 March 1760†". Malhar then began to search for a ford to cross the Ganga at Anupshahar. Here he wasted 3 or 4 days and this proved his ruin.

On 1 March 1760 Ahmad Shah despatched a strong force of 15,000‡ under Jahan Khan, Shah Pasand Khan and Qalandar Khan to prevent the Marathas from crossing the Ganga into Rohilkhand where all the Rohilla families lay unprotected.It was on the morning of 4 March that the Afghans saw the Maratha advance-guard under Gangadhar Tatya known as Chandrachud, 13 kilometres from Malhar's camp. The Marathas put up a brief resistance, and then fled away, leaving on the field many soldiers and several officers. Malhar and many of his men on unsaddled horses fled to Agra, while Gangadhar hurried to Mathura. Jahan Khan pursued Gangadhar up to the banks of the Jamuna opposite Mathura. Ahmad Shah also followed Jahan Khan and was one day's march behind him.

**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 14.2.1760.

†*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 15, 19, 23, 24 February 1760; *Miskin*, 204-7; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 178; Shejwalkar, 29.

‡Shejwalkar puts this number at 35,000. [*Panipat*, 29.]

From Agra Malhar proceeded towards Bharatpur. Surajmal received him at a distance of 50 kilometres. The Jat Raja offered Malhar full protection and swore on the Ganga water and *bel* leaves*.

Ahmad Shah cantons at Aligarh, March 1760

While following Jahan Khan in his pursuit of the Marathas Ahmad Shah reached Koil now called Aligarh on 5 March 1760. This district belonged to Surajmal. His commander Durjansal was in charge of Sabitagarh fort renamed Ramgarh. Though the fort was well stocked and fortified, yet he could not expect any reinforcement from his master who was separated from him by a distance of 80 kilometres and the river Jamuna. Durjansal surrendered the fort to the Durrani.

The hot weather was now fast approaching, making it difficult for the Durranis to exert much. The Maratha power in the north was broken. Fresh armies from the Deccan were shortly expected. The Afghan soldiers were to be given rest to get ready for the contest again. Najib therefore suggested that the Shah should canton his troops for the hot weather and the rainy season at Aligarh. The Durrani who placed full confidence in Najib, accepted his suggestion†.

In establishing Durrani headquarters at Aligarh, Najib had another object in view. There were a number of Maratha officers in the Ganga Doab, especially at Shikohabad, Etawah, Phaphund and Bithur near Kanpur. All these with the exception of Etawah fell into Najib's hands, and thereby he established direct contact with Avadh‡.

**SPD*, ii, 120, 121; xxi, 187, 188; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*,177–8; *Rajwade*, i, 178; vi, 403; *Siyar*, iii, 65; *Miskin*, 209; *Sarkar*, ii, 228-9; *Grant Duff*, i, 604–5; *Shakir*, 100.

†*Najibuddaulah*, 33; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 124a–125b; *Siyar*, iii, 65; *Shamlu*, 29–30; *Miskin*, 210; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 5, 23, 29 March 1760.

‡*Sarkar*, ii, 245–6.

CHAPTER XI

DURRANI'S DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS

The Shah's Negotiations begin

Having settled at Aligarh in March 1760, Ahmad Shah Durrani busied himself in hunting up for allies. There were five powers to be negotiated with. Of these two were Muslims, but they had been at variance to a large extent with Rohillas. Ahmad Khan Bangash of Farrukhabad was an ally of the Marathas. Shuja-ud-daulah was friendly towards them. Surajmal Jat could have easily formed an alliance with them. The Rajputs and Sikhs would have fully supported them. Even the trans-Ganga Rohillas could have been won over. But all these had been antagonised by the Marathas due to their rapacity and inconsistency. The Durrani tried to gain them as allies as far as possible, and failing that to assure himself that none joined the Marathas.

Submission of Ahmad Khan Bangash, April 1760

Ahmad Khan Bangash, though an ally of Marathas, was an Afghan brother of the Durrani. Besides his resources were not much as he possessed the small principality of Farrukhabad. Ahmad Shah and his Wazir Shah Vali Khan wrote him letters appealing to him in the name of race and religion, and holding out hopes of honour, elevation and favours. Ahmad Khan felt flattered at these letters, and arrived in the Durrani camp on 13 April 1760*.

But an alliance with Avadh was the uppermost in the mind of Ahmad Shah and Najib-ud-daulah.

Shuja-ud-daulah's Importance

Shuja-ud-daulah was the strongest Muslim ruler in India. He commanded two provinces of Avadh and Allahabad. This was the richest and most populous part of the country. His revenues were vast, and treasury was full. His army was powerful. It contained

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**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 13–4–1760; *Hayat Hafiz Rahmat Khan*, 90.

a body of 10,000 stark-naked (Hindu Nagas) Gosains whose fighting zeal was unsurpassable. They were mad fanatics ready to do or die in their master's service. They fought against Hindus and Muslims alike. They would most willingly drag away any Hindu girl to their master's bed. Equally effective was his corps of about 7,000 Qizal-bash soldiers, trained and disciplined under Nadir Shah. His artillery was superior to all except that of the Marathas. Both the rival parties tried their level best to secure him*.

Marathas fail to gain Shuja

Peshwa Balajirao and Bhau were of the opinion that Shuja-ud-daulah would be on their side in the impending conflcit with the Durrani. To a certain extent they were justified in this view. The Avadh rulers were Shias, while the Afghans were Sunnis. Safdar Jang had fought against Ahmad Shah Durrani in the battle of Manupur in 1748. In consequence the Durrani had supported the two Mughal princes to conquer Avadh in 1757. The Rohillas had been constantly approaching on the lands coveted by him. Besides Najib-ud-daulah was striving to establish at Delhi either Durrani monarchy or his own supremacy; whilst Shuja wanted the Mughal dynasty to remain in power with himself as the prime minister.

But the Marathas had forgotten that they had deserted Safdar Jang, their faithful ally, in 1753 for a greater temptation, and had joined Imad-ul-mulk who was the mortal enemy of the house of Avadh. Further, their constant demand for the control of Hindu holy places—Ayodhya, Prayag and Kashi—had irritated him deeply. Besides, their ideal of Hindupad Padshahi was a constant nightmare to him.

Yet the Peshwa and Bhau made a strong attempt to gain him over to their side. But the agent chosen by them was too weak and too small a person. It was Govindpant Ballal or Bundele, a revenue officer of Etawah. Malharrao was the fittest person for this job, but he was out of favour with the Poona court. So Balajirao and Bhau issued orders to Govind Ballal on 28 April 1760 to see Shuja-ud-daulah. He was to remind him that the relations of the Nawab's father with the Marathas in general and with Malharrao in particular had been friendly. The Maratha connections with Shuja were cordial and harmonious. The Marathas and the Nawab were

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*Cf. Srivastava in *Shuja-ud-daulah*, i, 84-5, and *in Sardesai Commemoration Volume*, 144.

interested in saving the Mughal dynasty from the Afghans. He was to be assured of a high office at Delhi.

Bhau also knew that mere diplomacy unsupported by armed strength would not bear fruit. He instructed the same Govind Bundele to construct a bridge of boats on the river Jamuna. The Bhau's army was to cross over into the Ganga Doab, and separate Shuja-ud-dulah from Rohillas and Afghans in the upper Doab. Owing to Govind Ballal's inability to negotiate and to secure boats both the schemes fell through*.

Durrani's Negotiations succeed

Najib-ud-daulah took full advantage of the absence of the main Maratha army from the Doab, and the inadequate resources of Govindpant Ballal. Najib and Jahan Khan marched at the head of a strong force and seized the Maratha districts of Shikohabad, Etawah, Phaphund and Bithur near Kanpur. Thus Ahmad Shah Durrani was brought in direct contact with the frontier of Avadh. Shuja-ud-daulah was so much frightened at this move that he left Lucknow, and encamped at Mahdighat on the Ganga near Kanauj on 18 April 1760†.

Ahmad Shah Durrani opened communication with Shuja-ud-daulah, offering him the prime ministership under Shah Alam. He sent to Lucknow Malikah-e-Zamani‡, widow of Emperor Muhammad Shah, who hated the Marathas and Imad-ul-mulk for their outrages on the royal camp at Sikandarabad. She put pressure upon Shuja's mother whom she had known since childhood. The Durrani afterwards deputed his commander-in-chief Jahan Khan and his plenipotentiary for Indian affairs, Najib-ud-daulah§, as his envoy extraordinary. They were provided with a formally signed and sealed treaty both by Ahmad **Shah** Durrani and his Wazir Shah Vali Khan confirming **Shah** Alam as Emperor and Shuja-ud-daulah his Wazir.

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*Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-daulah*, i, 86. Bhau wrote to Govind Ballal on 4 July 1760:

"Shuja is going (to Durrani). He does not pay heed to my advice. So now we must send our forces across the river". [*Rajwade*, i, 212.]

†*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 18–4–1760.

‡*Sindhias of Gwalior*, ii, 296, p. 216.

§*SPD*, ii, 127, p. 142, dated 27–6–1760.

Meanwhile Bhau had also been making frantic efforts to induce Shuja to join the Marathas*. He deputed his personal agent, Shyamji Ranganath, with a personal letter. He told Shuja that the Marathas wanted to retain the Mughal dynasty in power for which Shuja was also anxious. In another letter Bhau had appealed to Shuja's mother who wielded great influence upon her son. In both the letters as well as through his envoy, the Bhau had assured Shuja of prime ministership of Delhi†.

Shuja received Najib on the eastern bank of the Ganga with great warmth and respect. Najib presented Durrani's letter and asked for alliance. Shuja showed him Bhau's letter reminding the Nawab of the friendship that had existed between the Peshwa and Safdar Jang, pointing out Shuja's duty in preserving the Mughal dynasty, and offering him the office of the wazir. As Najib had also fought on the side of the Marathas against Safdar Jang, he did not touch this point. But he laid emphasis on retaining Shah Alam on the throne, and keeping Shuja his wazir and presented him the treaty which he had brought with him. He further argued that taking the worst point of view, Shuja would lose nothing by an Afghan victory, but he would lose everything by a Maratha victory, as in that event, they would certainly conquer Avadh, Bihar and Bengal. He dwelt at length on the Maratha friendship with Imad-ul-mulk, the greatest enemy of the house of Avadh. He also proved Maratha inconsistency in the past telling him that their word could not be relied upon. He praised Shuja's wisdom and sagacity in coming to his rescue at Sukkartal against Marathas. Lastly he pleaded in the strongest possible terms in the name of Islam declaring that it was a fight between the believers and the infidels.

Shuja raised certain objections. He was a Shia and might be hated in the Durrani camp. He was an India-born Irani, and Ahmad Shah and his nobles might look down upon him. He was addicted to drinking which could not be tolerated in the Afghan camp. His father had fought against the Shah in 1748, and he might be contemplating some revenge.

Najib-ud-daulah "pledged his honour and took the most solemn oaths to assure Shuja of the fullest safety and honour if he visited

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*Bhau writing to Govind Ballal on 10 July 1760 stated that "Shuja has completely befooled us". [*Rajwade*, i, 216, p. 321.]

†Bhau wrote on 5 July 1760: "I have sent a letter promising good faith on my side to Shuja and his mother". [*Rajwade*, i, 217 A, p. 324.]

Abdali. The ambassador warmed up and exclaimed, 'What have you to do with the nobles in Abdali's camp? God be my witness that if the Shah himself frowns at your Highness, I shall immediately dig his two eyes out. If I do not do it, I am not my father's son. There are 1½ lakhs of Afghans in India; consider them as your servants. If any other envoy had come and you had rejected his message, I should not have complained. But as I have come, putting my faith in your grace, listen to my words. Do one of two things now: either go to Abdali's side, or here is my dagger and here my neck; cut it with your own hand. If you so desire, I shall give you a writing, sealed with my seal, absolving you from the consequences of my murder". This had the desired effect, and Shuja agreed to join the Durrani*.

Shuja-ud-daulah unites with the Durrani, July 1760

Having succeeded in his mission Najib-ud-daulah reported himself to the Shah who conveyed written solemn assurances to Shuja-ud-daulah for his safety as well as the robes of honour as prime minister of Delhi. The Nawab left for Anupshahar at the head of his army of Nagas and Qizalbashes. He was warmly received a few kilometres away by the Afghan Premier Shah Vali Khan. Then Prince Timur greeted him in a ceremonial way while Ahmad Shah on 18 July 1760 showed him every consideration and courtesy, and addressed him as his own son. Govind Ballal repoted on 31 July 1760: "Shuja saw Abdali at Anupshahar. Abadli accorded him a warm welcome. The next day he offered him the robes of prime minister-ship." Shuja said: "Who is the Padshah? Whom am I to serve? You become Padshah, and then I shall take up the duties of your Wazir. Before that do not make me the laughing stock†".

Raja Surajmal of Bharatpur

Almost equally important was Raja Surajmal, the richest and strongest Hindu ruler in northern India. An alliance with him was coveted by both the parties. The Durrani had deeply offended him in 1757. He therefore aimed at securing money if possible, otherwise but to detach him from the Marathas, even by inducing Imad-ul-mulk so that the latter would not allow him to join Marathas.

**Sarkar*, ii, 277-8; *Rajwade*, i, 173, 174, 176, 179, 187, 189, 191, 196, 199, 202, 204, 215, 217a, 219, 222, 226, 233, 236; *Kashiraj*, 5, 10, 11; *SPD*, xxi, 186; *Husain Shahi*, 53; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 179; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 75, 79–81; *Mujmil*, 127.

†*Rajwade*, i, 236, p. 341.

After his victory over Dattaji on 10 January 1760, Ahmad Shah came to Delhi, and called upon Raja Surajmal to pay him tribute and join his camp. On such occasions Surajmal invariably played a humble role, pleading that he was a petty zamindar. He informed the Shah that he would readily pay his share to the lawful Government of Delhi at the fixed time of payment. If the Durrani stayed in India and assumed sovereignty, he would obey him as his legal master. At the time of demand he possessed no money as his country had been ruined by the constant movements and pillage of Marathas and Afghans. It was not in Durrani's nature to tolerate such defiance. He besieged Surajmal's fort of Dig on 6 February 1760*. After a short while he realized that it would require a very long period to reduce a strongly fortified, largely garrisoned and heavily provisioned fortress. In such cases he did not make it a matter of prestige. He quietly raised the siege, and marched in pursuit of Malharrao†.

Having routed the Maratha chief at Sikandarabad on 4 March 1760, Ahmad Shah marched upon Koil‡ (modern Aligarh) which belonged to Raja Surajmal, and invested the Jat fort of Ramgarh. It was commanded by Durjansal. The fort was well-garrisoned and fortified , and large stocks of provisions had been stored therein. The fort could have resisted for long; but the *qiladar* was disheartened at the occupation of the entire upper Ganga Doab by the Afghans, and to save himself from massacre he capitulated in a fortnight or so§.

Surajmal was afraid that the fate of Ramgarh fort might not befall any other of his forts. He opened negotiations with the Durrani. Ahmad Shah demanded 45 lakhs.¶ The Durrani deputed Hafiz Rahmat Khan to Surajmal. The Raja prolonged the discussions. When Bhau arrived in his territory at the head of a large army, Surajmal suspended peace negotiations, and dismissed Hafiz Rahmat Khan without paying anything||. Towards the end of September 1760, Ahmad Shah and Shuja-ud-daulah tried to assure themselves that Surajmal should not join the Marathas. So both of

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**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 3–2–1760 says that on that day "Abdali started against Surajmal". See also the entry dated 7–2–1760.

†*SPD*, xxi, 186; *Qanungo*, i, 117.

‡The Durrani "plundered half of Koil". [*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 29–3–1760.]

§*Husain Shahi*, 52–3; *Miskin*, 210; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 76–7; *Sarkar*, ii, 272–3; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 29 March and 10 April 1760.

¶*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 26–4–1760.

||*Ibid*, dated 8–6–1760; *Hayat Hafiz Rahmat Khan*, 88–9.

them sent robes of honour to Raja Surajmal at Ballabgarh. The Raja agreed, put on the *khila'ts* and "took many oaths" giving every assurance that he would not support the Marathas*.

Rajputs profess allegiance to the Durrani

In his dealings with the Rajputs Ahmad Shah Durrani was equally successful. At this time Jaipur and Jodhpur were the two leading houses of Rajasthan. Both of them had been so much worried by constant Maratha interference and oppression that they began to cherish friendly feelings towards Ahmad Shah Durrani. Raja Ishwari Singh of Jaipur was the first to come into direct contact with the Durrani. Ahmad Shah was then on his first invasion of India. The Mughal army lay encamped at Manupur near Sarhind to oppose him. Ishwari Singh had joined the imperial army. When the rival forces came to fight, Ishwari Singh did not behave like a Rajput. Just in the thick of the battle he fled away, thus avoiding provocation of the invader.

In January 1757 the Durrani invaded Delhi and its neighbourhood for the first time. From Delhi the Afghan and Rohilla armies marched to Ballabgarh, Brindaban, Gokul, Mathura and Agra. On this occasion their atrocities exceeded all bounds of propriety and trangressed all considerations of humanity. They behaved like fiends and savages. But no Rajput Raja stirred to protest against these barbarities. A Marathi despatch of February 1757 stated: "The Rajahs of Amber (Jaipur) and Jodhpur call themselves Abdali's servants. They have invited him to be relieved of the Marathas. In return they have agreed to serve him. They will not fight Abdali†".

Durrani expresses his regard for Rajputs

With the next Durrani invasion of India, 1759-61, the Rajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur were actively associated. They had joined Najib and others in inviting the Shah to India to crush the Marathas. In this period regular friendly correspondence was maintained between these Rajput princes on the one hand and Ahmad Shah Durrani, his son Timur Shah, Wazir Shah Vali Khan and Najib-ud-daulah on the other. In one letter addressed to Raja Madho Singh of Jaipur the Durrani speaks about the "affection he bore to his brother" and "the soft corner he had in his heart for the whole

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**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 24 September 1760.

†*SPD*, xxi, 101; *Ahmad Shah Baba-e-Afghan*, 259.

Rajput community". Madho Singh wrote a letter to the Peshwa, and sent its copy to Najib-ud-daulah who was present in the Durrani camp. Najib approved of its contents. Full information about Durrani's deeds was supplied to Madho Singh. He was told that the Durrani would stay in India in the summer of 1760, and in the coming winter would invade the Deccan to destroy the Maratha menace for ever. Ahmad Shah did not ask the Rajputs to join him in the contest against Marathas. He simply wanted them to destroy or drive away the Marathas from Rajasthan, and to capture every Maratha running away from Delhi in that direction. He expected a tribute from them, but in a peaceful manner and not by coercion.

"If only his promise of safety could be relied upon, every one of the Rajahs would gladly wait upon him", wrote Badrinath son of Keshavrao. But they fully knew that the Shah was treacherous, cruel and merciless. So they bided their time, and kept him engaged in parleys for settlement of the amount . Financial transactions were carried on through Najib-ud-daulah*.

Substance of the Correspondence between Madho Singh and Durrani Court

Sayed Hasan Askari refers to eighteen letters which passed between Madho Singh and the Durrani Court in his article entitled "Durrani—Rajput Negotiations, 1759–61†". He does not give dates of all these letters, but mentions only the letter number and folio of the manuscript of most of them.The series opens with a letter from Madho Singh to Prince Timur Shah. The Raja wrote that he had deputed his Bakhshi Rao Sahaj Singh to his court and that he should be supported in his mission. Timur replied, dated January 1757, that the Bakhshi had not yet arrived in his court, but he had issued instructions to Rahman Khan, a constant attendant of the Shah for promoting the affairs of the "Maharaja‡".

The Durrani wrote to Madho Singh saying that Najib-ud-daulah had given him all information about the Raja. He advised him to join hands with Raja Bijay Singh of Jodhpur and close all exits on the Marathas. The Shah assured the Raja that he would be rewarded in proportion to his devotion and service§.

**Sarkar*, ii, 226–7.

†*Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 8th session, 1945, pp. 258-69.

‡*Murasalat-e-Ahmad Shah Durrani*, Letter 5, folio 45a; *IHCP*, 261.

§*Ibid*, Letter 1, ff 66a–67b; *IHCP*, 261.

Madho Singh wrote to Ahmad Shah Durrani that he depended on the Shah's "friendly disposition and good faith" and on his "devices and plans for the expulsion of the erring bodies of the Marathas". The Durrani acknowledged the letter of "the Maharaja" saying that Najib had informed him about the Raja's affairs and he desired to extend his patronage to him. He asked the Raja to depute a trustworthy representative to his court to submit a detailed report of the prevalent situation*.

Another letter written by Durrani to Madho Singh held out high hopes of greater rewards than any Rajput prince had ever obtained from the Mughal Emperors. He said: "You must take it for certain for the words of the King are undisputed. I, the Qibla of the world and of its creatures, have got in view to show favours to you, and have had, from times of old, a soft corner in my heart for the Rajput community.....God willing you will attain pre-eminence and distinction greater than in the days of the preceding sovereigns of Hindustan.....Give concrete proofs of your sincerity, and you will attain what you desire, and everything will be done as you wish†".

On 10 December 1759 at Khizarabad near Rupar in Ambala district the Durrani addressed Madho Singh as "the Raja of Rajas", and praised him for having won fame as being the opponent of the Deccanis. He expressed hope that he would be able to crush Sindhias. He asked the Raja to see him so that his demands could be conceded. He advised Madho Singh to strike hard at "these malevolent people so that they could be completely wiped out of Hindustan‡.

On this very day (10 December 1759) Najib-ud-daulah sent a letter to Madho Singh. He tried to secure active co-operation of Rajput princes by assuring them that Ahmad Shah would seize the Delhi throne for himself and would settle here permanently. He wrote: "As I have not heard from you for some time I feel anxious for your welfare and am expecting eagerly to get the good news. Although I feel assured on account of the ascendancy gained by your men, the defeat of the mischievous people and the stoppage of their passages, yet on the receipt of your kind letters and detailed report I should feel doubly re-assured and happy. As regards the fresh news of this quarter of this side "the oppressive people seeing the

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**Ibid*, letter 3, ff. 34–5; *IHCP*, 261.
†*Ibid*, Letter 2, ff. 34a–b; *IHCP*, 262.
‡*Ibid*, Letter 19, ff. 31a-b; *IHCP*, 262.

assemblage of forces on my side and the combination of all the chiefs and realizing their own inability to continue to the struggle, felt ashamed and disgraced . Just at the time news arrived of the approach of the powerful army of His Majesty towards Sarhind and this broke their heart. Being perplexed and uneasy they became eager to beat a retreat. But 'as death held them by their skirt' and the time of their overthrow had come they raised the siege here on the 17th of Rabi II (8 December 1759) and are proceeding to that side with heart full of fear and have arrived on the bank of the Jamuna. The Alexander and Dara of this age is making a rapid march from Sarhind and has arrived in the vicinity of Banur and Chhat and is about to overtake the accursed. This time His Majesty has come to restore the affairs of Hindustan in combination and consultation with the chief men of this country and to chastise and overthrow the wicked people. He would also pay a visit to the Deccan lands. Orders have been issued to the *sardars* and servants of His Majesty to bring their families and children to Lahore and increase the population thereof. As we need not stand on ceremony I would ask you to write immediately an '*arzdasht*' to His Majesty and an '*arzi*' to his wazir and send them to me. Join hands with Maharaja Bijay Singh in crushing the enemies"*.

Accordingly Madho Singh sent a letter to Ahmad Shah. He informed the Shah that he had forwarded the Shah's letters to Raja Bijay Singh of Jodhpur, and that Malhar was fighting in Rajasthan. When Janko would be defeated by the Durrani, Malhar would flee. The Durrani acknowledged this letter and stated that he had inflicted a crushing defeat on a party of 20,000 Marathas on 24 December 1759. Many of the Marathas were killed, some were captured, while a few more dead than alive managed to escape†.

Najib's letter narrated the same event‡. The letter of Shah Vali Khan to Madho Singh described another engagement which is not mentioned anywhere else. He says that an action took place on 29 December 1757 on the banks of the river Jamuna. The Marathas were supported by the Delhi Wazir Imad-ul-mulk and Bahadur Khan Baluch. As usual the Marathas were defeated. He praised the Raja for having fought against the Marathas. He asked him to post his troops on the various roads leading to Delhi and to punish

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**Ibid*, Letter 11, ff, 49–50; *IHCP*, 263–4.

†*Ibid*, Letter 12, ff, 31b, 32a–b; *IHCP*, 264.

‡*Ibid*, Letter 14, ff, 31b–32a; *IHCP*, 264-5.

the fleeing Marathas. "God willing they would be crushed*".

Madho Singh wrote another letter to the Durrani who while acknowledging it mentioned receipt of letters addressed by Rohillas. He informed the Shah that Imad-ul-mulk and Jankoji Sindhia had approached him for assistance, but the Raja had turned down their overtures, and had given them no help. Shah urged him to remain steadfast in his resolution. He demanded the presence of the Raja's representative in his camp†.

Shortly after this Ahmad Shah addressed another letter to Madho Singh in which he praised the Raja for his honesty and devotion. He told him that he had inflicted a defeat upon the Marathas and had cleared the field for the Rohillas who were with him. He gave details of Malhar's rout by his troops at Sikandrabad on 4 March 1760. He asked Madho Singh not to allow Malhar to escape if he entered his country. The Shah added that he would stay in India during summer and rains and would invade the Deccan in winter.

Shah Vali Khan wrote another lengthy letter to Madho Singh "of the some date and of almost similar contents.‡"

The Sikhs

Lastly a reference may be made to the Sikhs. They possessed such independence of spirit and boldness of purpose as to submit

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**Ibid*, Letter 13, ff, 41a–42b; *IHCP*, 265.

†*Ibid*, Letter 15, ff, 40–1; *IHCP*, 265

‡*Ibid*, Letter 18, ff, 42a;–44a *IHCP*, 1945, p. 266.

Then follows a long letter from the Durrani to Madho Singh which contains a detailed account of the battle of Panipat. Before leaving India Ahmad Shah was anxious to secure as much money as possible. He was desirous of getting tribute from the Rajput princes. So he concluded his letter thus: "It is time that those who had been sincerely attached to me should partake of the table of my favours and blessings...Ashrafulwozra ...has repeatedly impressed me with your sincere attachment and devotion. You should make haste in coming before my presence for I have got in my view the restoration of the affairs of this vast country and have accordingly called all the *Omaras* and Rajas to my presence".

Finding that neither Madho Singh nor Bijay Singh had come to Delhi nor to wait upon him, he deputed his Prime Minister Shah Vali Khan to Agra to extort money from Surajmal and the Rajputs. He in vain called upon Madho Singh to meet the Wazir .[*Ibid*, Letter 27, ff, 38a–b; *IHCP*, 269.]

The last of the series of these letters was addressed by Raja Har Sahai, confidential agent of Raja Madho Singh to Shah Vali Khan. In it he acknowledged receipt of the Wazir's letter, and then gave a detailed account of Malhar's doings in Rajasthan. This letter obviously refers to post-Panipat events.

[Letter 32, ff, 52b–55a; *IHCP*, 1945, p. 269.]

neither to the Durrani nor to the Marathas. Not to speak of any submission, they were not prepared even to co-operate with the invader by allowing him to pass through the Panjab to Delhi unmolested.

As regards the Marathas, the Sikhs were quite willing to work in common with them in expelling the foreign invader, but they did not want Maratha rule in the Panjab. Marathas knew this fact, and hence they would not seek their help. Raja Alha Singh was an exception, as he always offered allegiance to any stronger power. Ahmad Shah Durrani tried to check the lawless activities of the Sikhs, but without success. Let us have a glance at what the Durrani governors and the Sikhs were doing while Ahmad Shah was at Aligarh, Anupshahar and Panipat.

While passing through the Panjab in November 1759, Ahmad Shah Durrani had appointed Jarchi Karimdad Khan, nephew of Shah Vali Khan, to the governorship of Lahore. Owing to the Sikh predominance in the Jalandhar Doab, he had entrusted these districts to Raja Ghamand Chand of Kangra, thinking that he might be able to control the Sikhs. Sarhind division was placed under the charge of Zain Khan. In March 1760 the Shah decided to stay in India. His main consideration was now to protect his line of communication with Afghanistan, across the Panjab. Being deficient in a strong park of artillery, he had ordered his Panjab governors to cast guns of a good calibre and send them on to him. It was on this occasion that the Panjab's famous gun, Zamzama was cast by collecting brass and copper vessels from Hindu and Sikh houses*. Besides the Durrani needed supplies of horses, bullocks, weapons, and food material.

He summoned Karimdad Khan and Zain Khan, the two able and energetic governors of Lahore and Sarhind, for consultation in March 1760. They reported to him that the Sikhs were getting stronger day by day, that Ghamand Chand had failed in controlling them, and that it was a difficult task to check their lawlessness in view of the meagre resources of Afghan officers in men and money. Ahmad Shah decided to appoint the diplomatic Abdus Samad Khan who two years before had won the favour of the Marathas. Abdus

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*Sohanlal, ii, 6; *Imperial Gazetteer of India, Punjab*, ii, 127.

Samad preferred Sarhind, and Lahore was given to Sarbuland Khan*. The latter was so much terrified of the Sikhs that he did not proceed beyond Jalandhar. He appointed S'aadatyar Khan to Lahore, and Rustam Khan to Chahar Mahal. Abdus Samad Khan took charge of Sarhind.

All these governors failed to subdue the Sikhs or to win over their co-operation and support. The Sikhs flatly declined to submit to Muslim authority. First of all they fell upon Rustam Khan and his deputy Tahmas Khan Miskin, who in his memoirs has given an interesting and detailed account of this incident. He says that a report came to Rustam Khan about the attack of 50 Sikhs on a village 18 kilometres from Sialkot. Rustam Khan and Tahmas Khan at the head of 150 horse and foot rushed to the rescue of the village. The Sikhs on seeing them coming dashed upon them. Rustam Khan and Miskin took shelter in a neighbouring fort. It was immediately besieged. They spent the night there. Next morning the Sikhs loudly shouted: "Hand over Rustam Khan, Governor of Chahar Mahal to us". Having exhausted their ammunition, they threw upon the Sikhs "from the top of the fort clods of earth, pieces of stone, broken earthen vessels, and pieces of wood."

When the supply of these things had run short, the Sikhs climbed up the walls of the fort. Out of 150 men only 6 were now left with the Governor. Rustam Khan, Miskin, and these six men were seized by the Sikhs. One of them Alahvardi Beg was slain. They were kept as prisoners the whole day and the following night. They were made to trot on foot. "I had walked 20 kilometres. My feet were aching, and I was feeling exhausted." Miskin remained in captivity for ten days and was liberated after paying Rs. 200. Rustam Khan was subjected to greater hardship, and was set free on the payment of Rs. 2,200†.

Then came the turn of S'aadatyar Khan, Governor of Lahore. He fled away leaving the charge of the capital with Mir Muhammad Khan. A body of 10,000 Sikhs attacked the city. The Governor shut

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**Delhi Chronicle*, 172 dated 23 March 1760 says: "Jiwan Khan alias Buland Khan came from the Shah (Aligarh) and entered the *Haveli* (at Delhi). People said that he was appointed *subahdar* of Lahore and was accompanied by Samad Khan *faujdar* of Sarhind." cf. *Ali-ud-din*, 120b–121a; *Shamshir Khalsa*, 104; *Sohanlal*, i, 149; *Miskin*, 215, 224.

†*Miskin*, 218–24.

the gates, and himself retired to the fort for safety. The Sikhs plundered the suburbs and destroyed the crops. Then they tried to break through the city walls. The Governor offered the Sikhs a sum of Rs. 30,000 for *karah parshad* and begged them to retire*.

Thus the Afghan rule in the Panjab was dislocated, and the authority of the Durrani officers was paralysed.

**Ali-ud-din*, 120a–121b; *Sohanlal*, i, 150; *Shamshir Khalsa*, 104-15; Kanhiyalal, *Tarikh-e-Panjab*, 83.

CHAPTER XII

MARATHAS MASTER IMPERIAL CAPITAL

The Zenith and Nadir of Balajirao

Now turning to the Marathas, we find that in February 1760 they had won a great victory over the Nizam of Haidrabad. By the treaty of Udgir some of the most important forts and territories in the Deccan had fallen into their hands. They included Burhanpur, Asirgarh, Daulatabad, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Mulher, all worth 45 lakhs a year. Besides the Nizam had agreed to pay Rs. 15 lakhs by way of Chauth. Two days later came the news that the Durrani had invaded India , that he had recovered the whole of the Panjab, that Dattaji had raised the siege of Sukkartal without gaining any money from Najib , that Sabaji was worsted at Taraori, and that Dattaji had been slain at Barari. Thus at one stroke the Maratha power and prestige in northern India had vanished like smoke*.

Sadashivrao Bhau given Command of the Northern Expedition, 13 March 1760

To recover their lost ground the Peshwa decided to send to the north a large army under his younger brother Raghunathrao, then 26 years old, who had been to the north twice before. Raghunath's selection was opposed by the Peshwa's cousin Sadashivrao Bhau in his (30th year) on the ground that his previous two expeditions had ended in heavy debt, and that he did not possess sufficiently long military experience. At this time the Bhau enjoyed the highest reputation as a financier and military organiser. He was popular with civil officers as well as military commanders. The success in the recent campaign of Udgir was due to him. So the command of the northern expedition was entrusted to the Bhau. But the Peshwa's son, Vishwasrao, 17 years old, was appointed as the nominal generalissimo†.

**SPD*, i, 9, 83; *Rajwade*, i, 155, 157, 164, 165; *Sarkar*, ii, 235-7.

†*Khare*, i, 14; *Rajwade*, i, 167, 168; *Sarkar*, ii, 238-9.

Sadashivrao "was violent and avaricious, but active and vigorous, he had a large share of good nature and of good sense*". Grant Duff draws the correct picture of Bhau in these words:

> "The natural violence of Bhau's temper was increased by the family jealousy he had experienced, and the factious intrigues to which it gave rise. His pride was augmented by his extraordinary good fortune in the late campaign, and the spirit of military enthusiasm so dangerous in a general without experience, took complete possession of his mind. Success had inspired him with a blind confidence, which salutary reverses in a humble sphere would in all probability have amended†".

Bhau's inadequate equipment and handicaps

The Bhau was supplied with 10,000 of the Peshwa's own household troops, 12,000 soldiers of the subordinate chiefs, 8,000 disciplined sepoys trained in the European manner under Ibrahim Khan Gardi, and 20,000 Pindaris‡, a class of freebooters only. "The munitions sent with him from the Ahmadnagar arsenal consisted of 8,184 connon balls of large size (against 19,000 required), 160 maunds of lead, 800 maunds of gunpowder, 99,150 flints for muskets, and a quite inadequate quantity (65 sheets against 2,000 requisitioned) of European paper for charging the muskets". The Bhau advanced some money to his troops in order to equip themselves. "The Peshwa absolutely refused to part with any money for the support of the army to be employed in this undertaking declaring 'that a Maratha army ought always be able to adjust itself by plunder'§". The only money given by the Peshwa was in the form of bills for Rs. 1,88,000 on the bankers of Indor and Ujjain¶, while "the monthly expenses of this expeditionary force reached five to six lakhs of Rupees‖ ".

The Peshwa and Bhau both considered that this deficiency of money would be more than made up by the poor, 65 year old Govindpant Ballal also called Bundele. He was the revenue officer of Etawah

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*_Grant Duff_, i, 589.
†_Ibid_, i, 605; _Macdonald_, 3 (almost a verbatum copy.)
‡"Vast numbers of Pindharees, and irregulars of all descriptions flocked to the increasing host." (_Grant Duff_, i, 607; _Macdonald_, 5.)
§_Charles Hamilton_, 145.
¶_SPD_, ii, 122; _Khare_, i, 14; _Rajwade_, i, 168, 169; _Sarkar_, ii, 243.
‖_Sarkar_, ii, 243.

district in the Ganga Doab, and almost equal in rank to one of the Extra Assistant Commissioners of our days. The Peshwa believed that Govindpant would be able to produce so much gold from the El Dorado of the upper Ganga Doab that with half of its produce he would be able to pay the salaries of Bhau's army in the north for months together and support it with constant supplies of food, fodder, munitions, horses, bullocks, etc. He therefore demanded the other half of Govind's revenues for the Poona treasury*.

The Bhau in his estimation of Govindpant went a step further. He perhaps took him for Alladin's lamp. In addition to be a regular source of money and supplies, Bhau expected Govind to serve him in the capacity of an Extraordinary Ambassador so as to win over Shuja-ud-daulah† to the side of the Marathas. When Shuja joined the Durrani, Bhau commanded him to create disturbances‡ in Avadh and Rohilkhand so that Shuja and Rohilla chiefs would desert the Afghan camp. He also desired him to keep under his control 5 to 10 thousand Durrani soldiers who wanted to desert the Shah and jóin Marathas. What was the result of all these high hopes and exalted expectations? A sum of less than three lakhs of rupees only and besides starvation, distress, despair, defeat and death.

Thus Sadashivrao was given inadequate troops, insufficient munitions and meagre amount of money. Still greater disadvantage lay in Bhau's complete ignorance of the essential details of this campaign as he was given little time for preparation. He had never been to northern India, and knew nothing about its people and climate. He was encumbered with numerous families who accompanied the expedition to visit the sacred places of pilgrimage in northern India§. He did not carry boats as it did not strike him that the rivers in the north would be in flood. Besides, he was a man of short temper, and great pride and entirely disregarded the advice of his old captains who possessed experience of fighting in the north. Time was another important factor. In the presence of the enemy no time should have been lost in preparations and on the journey. The Bhau took more than a month in leaving the Deccan and the same time in crossing rivers Chambal and Gambhir. If even three

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*SPD, xxvii, 257, p. 247.

†*Rajwade*, i, 217A, p. 324.

‡*Ibid*, 212, 216, 237, p. 343, 242.

§For instance Nana Fadnis, then a lad of 18, was accompanied by his mother and wife. (*Macdonald*, 166.)

weeks had been saved, the Maratha forces could have crossed the Jamuna in June before it was flooded. The most suitable time of fighting with the Afghans was the summer months, when their energy and vitality was at its lowest, and not in winter of the Panjab when the Afghans were at their best and the Marathas at their worst.

Further, the Durrani being at Aligarh the battle would have been fought somewhere between Mathura and Aligarh. In that event the Maratha army would have been protected on three sides by the Jat country and the mighty Ganga. At Panipat they were surrounded by enemies on all sides.

This delay also enabled the Durrani to unite with him all the Muslim princes and people of northern India. He thus succeeded in making it a war between Islam and the *kafirs**.

Gorgeous Outfit

The Bhau's outer equipment was, however, gorgeous and awe-inspiring. "The lofty and spacious tents, lined with silks and broad cloths, were surmounted by large guilded ornaments, conspicuous at a great distance; immense parti-coloured walls of canvas enclosed each suit of tents belonging to the principal officers, vast numbers of elephants, flags of all descriptions, 'the finest horses magnificently caprisoned, and all these accompaniments of an Indian army which give such an imposing effect to its appearance, seem to be collected from every quarter in the Bhau's camp. Cloth of gold was the dress of the officers, and all seemed to vie in that profuse and gorgeous display characteristic of wealth lightly acquired. It was in this instance an imitation of the more becoming and tasteful array of the magnificent Moghuls in the zenith of their glory†."

Bhau's Principal Officers

Almost all the Maratha chiefs of note either accompanied or joined him under Peshwa's orders. At the start he had Balwantrao, Ganpat Mendele, Shamsher‡ Bahadur, Naro Shankar, Vithal Shivdeo and Trimbak Sadashiv Purandare. In the course of the journey he was joined by Malharrao Holkar, Jankoji Sindhia,

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**SPD*, ii, 124, 127; xxi, 190; xxvii, 258; *Rajwade*, i, 222; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 85a-b; *Charles Hamilton*, 146.

†*Grant Duff*, i, 606; *Macdonald*, 4.

‡*Grant Duff*, i, 607; *Macdonald*, 4; *Husain Shahi*, 54.

Damaji Gaikwar, Jaswantrao Pawar, Appajirao Atole and Antaji Mankeshwar.

Bhau encamps across the Chambal, 8 June to 12 July 1760

Sadashivrao left Sindkhed where he had matured his plans on 25 March 1760, crossed the river Tapti on 4 April, the Narbada on 12 April, and reached Sironj on 6 May 1760. The money supplied to him had been exhausted, and as usual his troops began to live on innocent people. In consequence "the villagers rose in his rear and made the roads unsafe for traffic and couriers*". Bhau arrived at Gwalior on 30 May. He crossed the river Chambal, 16 kilometres below Dholpur on 8 June. It took his camp fairly long to cross the Chambal and its difficult tributary Gambhir†. Bhau stayed here for over a month up to 12 July 1760. Now he was in the Jat territory. He prohibited his army numbering about 70 to 80‡ thousand from plundering the people , as he wished to remain on friendly terms with Surajmal. The Jat Raja supplied all their requirements and entertained them well. The Marathas enjoyed holy baths at Muchakund, a sacred place near Dholpur§.

Bhau's Diplomatic Negotiations

Right from the start, the Bhau tried to gain allies in northern India. He wrote to Hindupat of Bundelkhand, Rajput Rajas of Jaipur, Kotah, Bundi, Udaipur, Kamal-ud-din Khan Babi of Gujrat and Shuja-ud-daulah. In this task he mainly depended upon Govindpant Ballal who was pressed by Bhau again and again "to beat up for local allies everywhere, enlist the armed support of all the Rajahs of Rajputana and Bundelkhand, make an offensive alliance with the Nawab of Oudh by promising him the Wazirship of Delhi with Maratha support after the expulsion of Abdali, recruit two to three thousand musketeers of the Bundela and Rajput races in the Doab. In addition, there was the eternal insistent demand for money in every letter from the Bhau to Govind Ballal, the

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**Sarkar*, ii, 243.

†The river Gambhir is a hill torrent with lofty banks "cut up by numerous ravines". Its bed contains sand and shingle. On account of the violence of its mid-current, it is called *Ghora-Pachhar* or Overthrower of horses. (*N.W.P. Gazetteer*, vii, 423.)

‡*Purandare Daftar*, i, 387, p. 292, letter written by Sakho Mahadeo from Bhau's camp, dated 1-7-1760.

§*SPD* ii, 126; *Shejwalkar*, 41; *Sarkar*, ii, 244.

Commander-in-Chief's tone growing harsher and more reprimanding at the prolonged delay and default of that collector ..... "Send me 25 lakhs quickly, or at least 12 lakhs in 10 or 12 days. Your failure to pay is very surprising*".

In the camp situated between the rivers Chambal and Gambhir (8 June to 12 July) Malharrao and Jankoji joined Bhau on 18 June, and Surajmal and Imad-ul-mulk on 30 June† . The Bhau received Surajmal 3 kilometres away from his camp. Here he learnt that the Rajput princes were going to sit on the fence, that Shuja-ud-daulah had decided to join Ahmad Shah Durrani, and that no money could be collected in the Ganga Doab owing to the seizure of the Maratha districts by Jahan Khan and Najib, and the rise of dispossessed Rajput landlords against Marathas.

The Bhau wished to coerce Shuja by the presence of a large Maratha army on the borders of Avadh. But there being early rains the river Jamuna was in high floods. The Bhau having no boats, the Jamuna could not be crossed. Govind Bundele failed to collect boats on the opposite side due to the presence of the Afghans and the rise of the local people‡.

Hafiz Rahmat Khan's Negotiations fail

Meanwhile peace negotiations were going on between Malharrao Holkar and Hafiz Rahmat Khan. After his flight from Sikandarabad Malhar had taken shelter with Raja Surajmal at Bharatpur. He invited the envoy of Hafiz Rahmat Khan who interviewed Malhar's Diwan, Gangadhar Tatya. It was settled that Hafiz Rahmat Khan should meet Malhar to discuss terms of peace. Ahmad Shah wanted to realize tribute from Surajmal, and so he was assigned to perform both the duties.

The month of the Muslim fast was over on 16 May 1760. After celebrating the 'Id festival, Hafiz Rahmat Khan came from the Durrani camp to Bharatpur. He was received at Mathura by Gangadhar Tatya and Surajmal. Talks continued until Bhau's arrival, when the discussions were suddenly terminated§.

**Sarkar*, ii, 242-3; *Rajwade*, i, 174.

†*Prandare Daftar*, i, 387, p. 292.

‡*Sarkar*, ii, 245-6.

§*SPD*, ii, 121, 124, 127; *Rajwade*, i, 186, 191, 194, 195, 196, 198, 199, 200, 204, 209, 212, 215, 217; vi, 509; *Husain Shahi*, 53.

Surajmal's advice rejected

Raja Surajmal, the shrewdest diplomat of the time, did not approve of the Marathas engaging themselves in a pitched battle. He said that it was a dangerous experiment to adopt a new method of warfare in the north Indian setting. He strongly suggested the adoption of the old guerilla system of fighting. He proposed that all the heavy equipment, artillery, families, etc. should be left at Jhansi or Gwalior or in any of the Jat forts. The Maratha light cavalry should resort to constant foraging and skirmishing. They should also threaten the homelands of Afghans and Rohillas. This would compel them to desert Durrani who would leave for Afghanistan. Malharrao concurred with Surajmal. "But Sewdasheo Rao had an aversion to Holkar, the enemy of Ramchundur Shenwee, and from the connection between Holkar and the Jaths he imbibed a prejudice against Sooruj Mull*". The Bhau unceremoniously rejected the proposal as "the chatter of goatherds and zamindars" who were "ignorant of scientific war†".

Marathas capture Delhi, 1 August 1760

Bhau accompanied by Malharrao, Jankoji, Surajmal and Imad-ul-mulk reached Agra on 14 July. Finding the river Jamuna in high floods, he gave up his original plan of meeting Govind Ballal, and then force Shuja-ud-daulah into an alliance with the Marathas. He could not wait at Agra for three months until the water in the river fell at the end of the rainy season. The Bhau immediately marched northward. He reached Mathura on 16 July, and ordered his advance-guard under Malharrao, Jankoji and Balwantrao Mehendele to move towards Delhi. They assaulted the city on 22 July. The city fell, but the fort held out. The same day Imad entered his mansion, while the Marathas encamped in the environs of the city.

About one hundred Maratha troopers quietly slipped into the fort. Instead of opening the gates on their companions standing outside they began to plunder the royal apartments. Some of them were cut down by the Afghan guards of Yaqub Ali Khan, while others jumped down from the walls on the sandy bed, breaking their limbs. The fort was besieged and bombarded. On 27 July Gangadhar Maratha was shot dead with a musket ball. The Bhau arrived at

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*Grant Duff, i, 607; Macdonald, 5; Keene, 38; F. Barr, 167-8.

†Imad-us-Saadat, 180; Tarikh-e-Bhau-o-Janko, 28; Zakaullah, 305-6.

Delhi on 29 July. Yaqub Ali Khan called on Bhau in his tent to discuss terms of peace. Bhau generously allowed him to depart with his family, property and troops safely across the Jamuna in boats to join his master, Ahmad Shah. The fort came into Maratha possession on 1 August 1760. After a few days Naro Shankar was appointed *subahdar* of Delhi, and Baloji Palande in charge of the Fort under the *subahdar**.

Its Effect on Bhau's Mind

The imperial capital was captured with a little fighting and a little loss in men and money, as not more than twenty men were killed and wounded. It was a great achievement, no doubt, as the purely Indian flag had flown in this historic city after 200 years. Its occupation restored the Maratha prestige which had been rudely shaken earlier in the year by Durrani's victories. It caused despair and dismay in the Afghan camp. Even men of great resolution began to waver. "The Shah himself passed through a period of anxiety and avowed his readiness to return to his own country if only an honourable peace could be made with the Marathas and the Ruhelas could be assured of safety from Maratha aggression during his absence†".

This success, though not of much importance, as long as the Muslim confederacy remained intact, made Bhau somewhat prouder and haughtier than before. Nana Fadnis, one of Bhau's personal bodyguards, says: "His Highness, though wise, valiant and experienced, had latterly become proud and arrogant‡". The contemporary poet Mir Dard was living in Delhi and met Bhau and received due consideration from him writes that he was very proud and haughty§. On 2 August 1760, the next day after the Fort fell, Bhau wrote to Govind Bundele: "Ahmad Bangash and some Rohillas will leave for their homes. We have won a point by capturing

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**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 22, 27, 29 July, 1, 12 August 1760; *SPD*, xxvii, 258; *Rajwade*, i, 222, 223, 224; *Miskin*, 225; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 104-6; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 181; *Siyar*, iii, 66; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 180-3; *Grant Duff*, i, 608; *Macdonald*, 6.

On 1 August Bhau captured cannon Alamgir lying at Delhi Gate. [*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 1-8-1760.]

Grant Duff, 1, on p. 608 says that Bhau intended to place Vishwasrao on the throne of Delhi, but he was persuaded to postpone it until the expulsion of the Durrani.

†*Sarkar*, ii, 259.

‡*Macdoanld*, 168.

§*Mir ki Ap Biti*, 131, 132.

Delhi*". At the time of Maratha capture of the Red Fort, Shuja lay encamped on the opposite side of the Jamuna†. He began to think of winning over the Marathas‡.

On 21 August he again wrote to Govind Ballal: "Abdali's army has become disspirited as we captured Delhi. It is probable that all will leave him. Najib Khan alone is obstinate and optimistic§".

On 29 August Govind Ballal wrote to Bhau: "At night a consultation was held by the Shah; all his followers, high and low alike, advised him , 'you ought not to stay in this country. The strength of the Marathas is increasing daily. Therefore, do not listen to anybody else's [*i.e.*, Najib's] counsels, but make peace with the Marathas and go home," A report from the Durrani camp dated 21 September stated: "There is a tumult in Abdali's army. High and low, all urge him to come to terms with the Marathas and return home. Besides, he has no spirit for fighting left in him. At Anupshahr, ten thousand of his horses, camels and mules have died, and more are dying dialy. Thank God! the Peshwa's star is dominant¶".

Such reports were bound to inflate the pride and vanity of almost every young man of Bhau's age (he was below 30), position and achievements. But Bhau had a very heavy responsibility. On this occasion he had the future not only of his own, or his family's, but of the entire Maratha nation in his hands. In such a case it was his bounden duty to keep the Maratha fortunes intact if he could not enhance them. He should have resorted to warfare with such a formidable adversary as the Durrani only when his resources were absolutely superior to those of his opponents. He should not have allowed his own fancy, feelings and sentiments to dominate over the lives of thousands of men and women and the power and prestige of the whole empire.

Defection of Surajmal, 4 August 1760

Imad-ul-mulk, the most cunning and treacherous wazir of the Mughal Empire had deserted the Marathas after the battles of Taraori and Barari, and gone over to Raja Surajmal. Imad was a deadly foe of Shuja-ud-daulah of Avadh. The Bhau was trying to win over Shuja-ud-daulah by promising him the wazirship of Delhi.

**Rajwade*, i, 224, p. 329.

†*Ibid.*

‡*Ibid*, 191.

§*Ibid*, 233; P.238.

¶*Rajwade*, i, 236, 246, 247; *Sarkar*, ii, 260-1.

The Bhau had kept this fact a secret from Surajmal and Imad both of whom had accompanied him from Agra to Delhi.

On the very day of the fall of the fort into Maratha possession on August 1760, Shuja-ud-daulah from his camp on the other side of the Jamuna, sent a letter to Bhau through his *vakil*, Raja Devidatta. Referring to the Bhau's proposal he suggested that if the Peshwa would recognize Shah Alam as Emperor, his son Jawan Bakht as Crown-Prince, Shuja-ud-daulah as Imperial Wazir, and the Marathas agreed to return to the Deccan, he would persuade Ahmad Shah Durrani to return to Afghanistan*. The presence of such an important envoy in the Maratha camp could not remain a secret from Imad-ul-mulk and Surajmal who were there. Imad felt furious on finding that he was going to be ousted from that high office, and that his bitterest enemy would be installed in his place. In the matter of intrigue nobody else could surpass Imad. He had recently gone under the tutelage of Surajmal. He incited the Jat Raja against the Marathas.

Surajmal had never been happy with the Maratha contact, though he definitely preferred them to the Afghans and Rohillas. As a matter of fact he wished to keep himself aloof from the impending conflict. He would feel happier by the defeat of either of them. His main object in coming in the train of Bhau to Delhi was to obtain the control of the imperial capital with the help of Imad-ul-mulk from Bhau. This proposal was curtly turned down by the Bhau. Surajmal was therefore on the lookout for an opportunity to slip away. This excuse was found by him in Bhau's support of Shuja. The charge levelled against Bhau by Grant Duff is wholly unjustified. He writes that "all the Maratha accounts impute Sooraj Mull's defection wholly to the Bhau's misconduct"†. Similarly Sir Jadunath's allegation seems to be unfounded. He says that the Bhau "insulted and alarmed the Jat king beyond hope of appeasement‡".

On 1 August Imad and Surajmal went back to their camp at Tughlaqabad, and on 2 August retired to Ballabgarh without informing Bhau. On 3 August Bhau deputed his Secretary Mahipatrao Chitnis, Sindhia's Secretary Ramaji Anant, and Malhar's Secretary Gangadahr Tatya to persuade them to return, but in vain§.

**Delhi Chronicle*, dated, 1 August 1760.

†*Grant Duff*, i, 609; *Macdonald*, 7.

‡*Sarkar*, ii, 257.

§*SPD*, xxi, 190; xxvii, 258; *Rajwade*, i, 222; *Siyar*, Urdu translation, iii, 67; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 1-8-1760.

CHAPTER XIII

ARRIVAL OF COMBATANTS AT PANIPAT

Bhau's Financial Difficulties

Marathas stayed in the city from 22 July to 11 August, when Bhau shifted to Shalimar Garden, 10 kilometres north of Delhi, where he remained until 10 October 1760. During this period of eighty days, Bhau had to face many difficulties. His supplies of food and fodder ran short. The reason was that the Doab was under the Durrani and Rohillas, and so nothing could come from the other side of the Jamuna. The lands south of Delhi belonged to Surajmal who was annoyed with the Marathas. The Panjab districts situated to the north and west of the capital had been for a long time in a state of chaos and confusion, and not much could be expected from these quarters. Besides, it was the rainy season, and the health of men and animals was adversely affected. "The artillery bullocks have become weak and are dying due to rains*".

Scarcity of money caused him constant worry. His monthly expenses at Delhi were about 7 lakhs of rupees a month. The capture of the capital had devolved upon him an additional burden of one lakh† per mensem for the maintenance of the royal family, and payment of the palace officers and servants. He had received no arrears of tribute either from Surajmal or from Rajput princes. The Maratha collectors failed to realize revenues from the people in the Doab owing to constant disturbances and the presence of the Durrani. Hence he was in a dilemma.

Even as early as 7 May 1760, when Bhau was on his journey to the north, and lay encamped at Sironj, it was reported that a horse disease had spread in the army. It proved fatal, and many soldiers lost their all due to the loss of their horses, and the army was greatly troubled‡. On 26 June 1760 Bhau wrote to the Peshwa: "I am getting

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*_Rajwade_, i, 231, p. 337.
†_SPD_, xxvii, 257.
‡_Sindhias of Gwalior_, ii, 296, p. 216.

no money from any side,—neither from our *maḥals* [in the Doab] which are disturbed, nor from tribute which is being evaded [by our vassal chiefs]. If we are to overcome Abdali we require 30,000 horsemen. Many of my troopers have lost their chargers in the war with Nizam Ali, or from disease, and they have to be supplied with remounts. The parting gift for last year is still unpaid to my troops. As I cannot give them their full subsistence even, whence can I pay their overdue parting gift and bounty for equipment (*nalbandi*)? The troubles around Delhi have dispersed the bankers of this region; hence no loan can be raised here*".

A report from Bhau's camp at Delhi dated 5 August 1760 said: "There is no money for paying even one week's subsistence in a month; our men and horses are fasting†".

The royal palace had already been ransacked by Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Durrani. The ceiling of the Diwan-e-Khas was made of silver. A part of it also had already been removed by Imad-ul-mulk, the Delhi Wazir. The rest of it was taken out by Bhau on 6 August 1760. It was converted into coins amounting to 9 lakhs of rupees‡. There was a belief that huge treasures lay buried in the Fort. The Marathas expected that 10 to 12 krors could be found there. But the female apartments were out of bounds for all of them, and Bhau did not like to apply force like Ahmad Shah Durrani§. Jankoji Sindhia tried to know the hiding places. On 10 August he sat in the Saman Burj, called certain princes, whispered something in their ears and granted them *khilaats* and jewelled *sarpech*, but all this was to no purpose ‖.

The freshly stamped money could hardly last for a month or so, and Bhau was again reduced to sore straits. On 1 September 1760 Bhau again wrote to the Peshwa: "There is starvation in my camp; but no loan can be had; no revenue is being paid to me by any *kamavisdar* (collector), in spite of my having frequently written to them. My troops are going through many a fast¶".

**SPD*, ii, 130, 131; xxi, 193; xxvii, 255, 257, 258; quoted by *Sarkar*, ii, 263.

†*SPD*, xxvii, 257, 258; quoted by *Sarkar* ii, 265.

‡*SPD*, xxvii, 257, p. 247; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 6-8-1760; *Sarkar*, ii, 266; *Grant Duff*, i, 609; *Macdonald*, 7.

§*SPD*, xxvii, 258.

‖ *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 10-8-1760.

¶*Sarkar*, ii, 262.

The situation became serious about the middle of September 1760. On 15 September Nana Fadnis wrote from Delhi to his uncle (Baba): "Our army is powerful. But the supplies are short. Horses have forgotten gram. It is difficult for men also to get food*". On the same day Bapuji Ballal wrote to Naropant: "Even men in higher position have to go without food for a day or so. Horses do not see gram at all. Army has lost all spirit. Loans cannot be raised anywhere. Such a calamity has never befallen before. Men and animals have become weak. .....The end does not seem good†".

In spite of all this the armed chair politician , the Peshwa, demanded half of the revenues to be transmitted to Poona. The poor, miserable Bhau wrote to the Peshwa on 15 September 1760: "You have written that I should here use half of the revenues to be collected in these northern districts and send the half to Poona‡". Bhau then narrated his tale of woe with utmost respect and humility, but in a dignified manner. He stated: "I am sure you know the gravity of the situation here. No money can be collected by raids and forages. The time for the actual battle is fast approaching. So the army must be paid at any cost, and it must be kept in spirit. This year actual shortage of funds is being experienced. The army has to go on fast. Loans cannot be raised. The Ranagade money lenders at Delhi have left the place. The *kamavisdars* have not paid any money in advance (*rasad*). I have written to them all so many times, but I get only hollow replies that the money is being sent. But actually money is not sent by anybody. He informed the Peshwa that the total amount which actually came into his hand at Delhi was nine lakhs from silver ceiling, two lakhs sent by Govindpant Ballal and 75 to 80 thousand remitted by Baburao Konher§.

On 16 September Bhau wrote to Dhondo Malhar at Poona: "The real difficulty is of food. Nothing can be got due to the troubles from outside. Loans cannot be contracted ". On 18 September Bhau wrote a flattering letter to Govindpant to induce him to send money: "Now you are not an ordinary *mamlatdar*. You have under you an army equal to that of a Sardar¶". Another letter written

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**SPD*, ii, 131, p. 144.
†*SPD*, ii, 130, p. 144.
‡*SPD*, xxvii, 257, p. 247.
§*SPD*, xxvii, 257.
‖ *Purandare Daftar*, i, 389, p. 293.
¶*Rajwade*, i, 244, p. 350.

about the end of September stated: "There is a great stringency of coin in the camp. Cash sufficient to pay even a day's wages is not forthcoming. Horses have now no strength left in them. Soldiers are starving*".

Maratha Impressions of the Durrani

Financial distress led to psychological depression. Having sustained continuous defeats from the Durrani at Taraori, Barari and Sikandarabad, the mind of an average Maratha leader and soldier had been adversely affected. It created a defeatist mentality which went on steadily mounting, especially on account of their financial stringency and lack of allies. In course of time, it pervaded almost the entire Maratha camp under Bhau. This was an extremely dangerous state of affairs, as the issues of the battle are generally decided in the minds of the generals even before the actual fighting takes place.

On 7 May 1760 from Sironj Bapuji Ballal wrote to the Peshwa: "Shinde and Holkar are in the district of Jaynagar. They have lost the courage now to face the Pathan. They have been cowed down. Bhau is not very eager to attack him. He is proceeding slowly†". On 1 July 1760 Sakho Mahadeo wrote to Bajaba that the Durrani "is talked to be in ascendance and it is said that our side has been disheartened.....Naro Shankar is sent to Shuja. If he comes and joins this side, then it will take very little trouble to defeat Najib Khan and Abdali . But if he does not join Bhau, it will be a difficult task. It has been decided to accede to any of Shuja's demands. If he comes, it is all good; but if he does not, God's will must prevail‡".

Bhau himself wrote to Dhondo Malhar Purandare at Poona on 16 September 1760: "Both the armies are equally strong. But as he has defeated our Sardars, he is in spirits. I will try and see that all ends well without actual fight. In the last resort, if it comes to fighting, we will all join and give a good battle§". Towards the end of September it was reported: "Gilcha is really strong. It is God who will give us victory. We have to face a strong opposition ‖".

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*SPD, xxvii, 258.
†*Sindhias of Gwalior*, ii, 296, p. 216
‡*Purandare Daftar*, i, 387, p. 292.
§*Ibid*, i, 389, p. 293.
‖ *SPD*, xxvii, 258, p. 259.

Peace Negotiations

Financial stringency, political isolation and mental depression created an inferiority complex in the mind of Bhau. He saw his weak position clearly, but he had lost the capacity to accept it gracefully and act according to the dictate of circumstances.

Bhau had started writing to Maratha agents to canvass for support when he was still in the Deccan. But all his attempts met with failure. Bapuji Ballal wrote to the Peshwa from Sironj on 7 May 1760: "All the princes have been asked to join our side, yet nobody had done so"*. On 1 August when Delhi fell into Maratha possession, Surajmal also deserted them, and thus Bhau remained completely isolated without a single friend in a hostile land.

At this time Shuja lay encamped on the other side of the Jamuna opposite the capital. On 2 August 1760 Bhau wrote to Govind Ballal that Shuja was "on friendly terms†". His agent Devidatta had brought a proposal from his master to the effect that peace could be restored with the Durrani if Shah Alam was declared Emperor, his son Jawan Bakht the Crown Prince, Shuja-ud-daulah Wazir, and if Bhau agreed to retire to Deccan‡. It was reported that on 5 or 6 August Najib and Durrani with a strong force joined Shuja§. On 12 August Bhau informed Govind Ballal: "Shuja has written to me that though he has gone to Abdali, he will do what is good for us. Najib and Shuja are on the opposite bank‖". On the same day Rohillas and Afghans tried to cross the Jamuna at Barari Ghat, but the cannon of the Marathas opened fire on them, and drove them back¶. This very day *vakil* of Najib-ud-daulah also came for the discussion of peace terms≠.

Shuja continued his peace negotiations. On 20 August Bapuji Ballal wrote to the Peshwa: "Shuja-ud-daulah carries on some peace talks. Bhawani Shankar is the intermediary. Shuja has also appointed one of his men for this purpose. Both these are moving about between the two camps⊕". On this day exchange of fire took place between

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Sindhias of Gwalior, ii, 296, p. 216.
†*Rajwade*, i, 224, p. 329.
‡*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 1-8-1760.
§*Sindhias of Gwalior*, ii, 297, p. 217.
‖ *Rajwade*, *i*, 227, p. 333.
¶*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 12-8-1760.
≠*Ibid*.
⊕*Sindhias of Gwalior*, *ii*, 297, p. 217.

the two camps on the opposite sides of the river*. On 21 August Bhau wrote: "Najib Khan and Shuja are both trying for terms with me, but the talks are not systematic and worthy of decision†".

On 2 September 1760 Bhau wrote to Govind Ballal: "Rohillas and Abdali on the opposite bank are negotiating about a treaty. Shuja is taking a leading part in the talks. Shuja is speaking in good terms, but these Muslims cannot be relied upon‡." Five thousand horsemen of the Durrani marched towards Ghaziabad on that day§. On 12 September it was reported: "Shuja and Najib are probably trying to bring about a compromise.Very likely there will be a war.‖ Two days later (14 September) Krishnaji Anant wrote to Naropant: "Abdali with Najib and Shuja is encamped at Patparganj on the opposite bank of the Jamuna. Negotiations are being carried on through Shuja's camp. But the talks will not take a good turn . A battle alone will decide the matter¶". On 15 September Bapuji Ballal wrote to Naropant: "The level of the Jamuna will not come down within a month or so. Battle will take place after that preiod. I think there will not be a compromise≠".

Nana Fadnis wrote to his uncle (Baba) on 15 September: "Abdali who was near Anupshahar came opposite Delhi. But the Jamuna was in flood. He could not do anything, as we had captured all the available boats. So he halted there. We can see his forces. Shuja, Najib Khan, and all the Rohillas are all together. Shuja carries peace parleys, but he does not appear to be honest. So the talks will not be fruitful℔".

The final shape of the proposals, as it emerged after prolonged discussions, was reported by Bhau in a letter addressed to Dhondo Malhar Purandare at Poona dated 16 September 1760.The following terms were offered by the Durrani:

1. Sarhind should be accepted as the eastern boundary of the Durrani empire.

Ibid.
†*Rajwade*, i, 233, p. 338.
‡*Ibid*, i, 237, p. 343.
§*Ibid*, 238, p. 345.
‖ *SPD*, xxvii, 256.
¶*Ibid*, xxi, 191, p. 204.
≠*Ibid*, ii, 130, p. 144.
℔*Ibid*, ii, 131, p. 144.

2. Delhi should be left with Emperor Shah Alam.
3. Shuja-ud-daulah should be declared imperial Wazir.
4. Najib-ud-daulah should be appointed Mir Bakhshi or the Paymaster General of the Empire.

5. The affairs of the Empire should be left to the control of the emperor, his Wazir and Mir Bakshi, and the Marathas shouid not interfere with them*.

This implied that the Marathas should retire from northern India, and that the farthest limit of the Maratha empire in the north should be river Chambal from where the Jat territory began. Bhau literally stuck to the wishes of the Peshwa whose "instructions were clearly against ceding the Panjab to the Afghans†". Bhau therefore insisted on fixing river Indus as the boundary between the Maratha empire and the Afghan empire. He also wanted to retain control of the imperial capital and its affairs‡". It shows that Bhau did not believe in expediency and political compromises.

On the very face of them, the terms offered by the Maratha adversaries were ignoble. Their acceptance meant undoing the work of the past forty years. But peace made on these terms would have saved the Marathas from the disaster that befell them four months later. The Maratha leaders even left to themselves would have recovered their lost ground shortly afterwards. Their chances of governing the whole country as far as the Khaibar Pass or up to the river Indus were few and far between. The Sikhs were steadily rising to power. If they could drive away the Durrani beyond Attock, there is no reason why they would not have thrown back the Marathas out of the Panjab. At best the Maratha rule could have extended up to the river Satluj at Ludhiana, as Alha Singh and other cis-Satluj chiefs would have easily submitted to them. Even their victory at Panipat would not have enabled the Marathas to seize the Panjab from the Sikhs. Under these circumstances it would have been much better if the Durrani terms had been agreed to.

This settlement would have naturally involved the personal prestige of the Bhau. He would have fallen in the estimation of the Peshwa. He must have been taunted by the Peshwa's wife Gopikabai and Peshwa's younger brother Raghunathrao. But the safety of

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**Purandare Dafter*, i, 389, p. 293.
†*Sarkar*, ii, 259.
‡ *Purandare Daftar*, i, 389.

three lakhs of men and women under Bhau's charge was a sacred trust which he had no right to violate for the sake of maintaining his personal prestige and dignity. On the whole it appears that the penniless, friendless and defeatist Bhau deliberately led his starving men from grimness to the grave.

Bhau decides to leave Delhi

Towards the close of September 1760 starvation and suffering reigned supreme in the Maratha camp at Delhi. Horses, cattle and men were dying daily. Peace negotiations having failed, it was now certain to settle the dispute by sheer physical force. For that purpose it was imperative for Bhau to feed his men and animals and to raise their spirits as best as he could. Hence he decided to leave Delhi on an excursion both physical and spiritual for a month or so until the river Jamuna became fordable. He was to visit Kunjpura and Kurukshetra, and then either to return to Delhi or to cross the Jamuna and fight in the Ganga Doab in Saharanpur or Meerut district*.

Before leaving Delhi it was necessary for Bhau to secure safety of the capital as his base and to maintain his line of communication. On Friday, 10 October, the first day of the Navratras after Shradhs, Bhau deputed from his camp in the Shalimar Garden Appaji Jadhav and Nana Purandare to the Red Fort. Under his instructions they deposed Shah Jahan II, proclaimed Shah Alam Emperor, struck coins, and prepared seals in his name, appointed Shah Alam's son, Mirza Jawan Bakhat, Crown Prince, and declared Shuja-ud-daulah Imperial Wazir. The Maratha leaders and others offered *nazars* to the heir apparent. Naro Shankar was provided with 3,000 cavalry and 3,000 infantry consisting of Marathas and some local levies†.

Durrani Camp at Koil and Anupshahar

Let us now turn to Ahmad Shah. The Durrani was at Aligarh in March 1760. He was anxious to return to Afghanistan. It was never his aim to found an Afghan empire in India. He needed money alone in order to establish himself firmly in his homeland. He was fond of campaigns as they brought him gold and glory, and satisfied his

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**SPD*, xxi, 194, p. 207; *Rajwade*, i, 258, p. 361.

†*Rajwade*, i, 237, p. 43; 258, 259; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 10-10-1760; *Siyar*, iii, 67.

urge for adventure. But there was Najib who would not let him go until the Maratha power in the north had been completely crushed. The Durrani asserted that he had recovered the Panjab from Maratha occupation, that the great Maratha leader Dattaji had been slain, and the other Malharrao routed, that the remaining Maratha sardars and soldiers had been driven away to the Deccan, that Delhi had been secured and Surajmal had been humbled. He expressed fear that his soldiers might not be able to bear the burning Indian sun as it happened in 1757. Besides this time he had acquired no money, and there seemed to be no prospect of ganing it.

Najib pleaded in the most convincing manner that the real problem had not been solved yet. The Marathas were as strong as ever. The death of a leader or two, and of a few thousand soldiers did not mean much owing to the vast resources in men and money commanded by the Maratha empire. He asked the Durrani what solution he offered to the grand Maratha army on its way to northern India. He told him that the honour of Indian Afghans should be as dear to him as that of his own kith and kin. Being the Emperor of the Afghans, he was duty bound to protect them from the clutches of the infidels. As regards money Najib offered him ten lakhs from his own funds, and promised to procure him necessary supplies of food and fodder. According to Shejwalkar Najib daily supplied the Durrani with 200 maunds of grain and Rs. 1,500*. Ahmad Shah decided to stay. In the neighbourhood of Koil a large number of thatched huts of bamboo, reed and grass were erected for the troops. For the Shah and Afghan chiefs tents were brought from imperial stores at Delhi which was under Durrani's nominee Yaqub Ali Khan. On 4 April 1760 the Shah deputed his chief of artillery to fetch imperial cannon from the capital, and he transported them to the Afghan camp†.

The Durrani was at Aligarh for three months, and passed the hot weather there. At the approach of the rains which had set in rather early, Aligarh was found unsuitable. Elevated ground and vicinity of a river were essential requisites for a huge gathering of men and animals, for preservation of good sanitary conditions and healthy surroundings. On 23 June the Shah shifted his camp to Anupshahar, 40 kilometres to the east of Bulandshahar. The site chosen was along

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**Panipat*, 45.

†*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 4-4-1760.

the high bank of the Ganga. It was long but narrow. There were no holes or depressions around to allow pools of stagnant water to spring up during rains. The entire area was well-drained by the ravines which surrounded it. This place was advantageous to the Durrani from other considerations also. His left flank was secured by the swollen Jamuna. On his right were the territories of his allies Rohillas and Shuja-ud-daulah.

The Shah allowed the Rohillas to spend August and September at their homes to reinvigorate themselves, and to replenish their stores. The Durrani experienced at times acute scarcity of money and food material. Horses, camels and donkeys were dying, and by 21 September their loss was estimated at 10,000 in number. So being in difficulty the Shah said to Shuja: "You are a wealthy man. You are the lord of a country worth two krors. I am hard pressed for the dues of the army. You should make some arrangements about it". Shuja felt dejected. He went to the Durrani Wazir, Shah Vali Khan, and complained against the demand made from him. The Wazir replied, "You came here upon the word of a rogue (Najib). Nobody would have attacked you beyond the Ganga. I did not give you a word for protection. As you are here now, you must please the Shah". Being ashamed of his folly Shuja returned to his tent. On hearing this Najib visited the Durrani, and said, "I brought him here for your sake by acceding to everything he asked for. No money should be demanded from him*".

Ahmad Shah had deputed Shuja-ud-daulah to take up his position on the banks of the Jamuna opposite Delhi towards the end of July 1760. Najib-ud-daulah had joined him a few days later. The Durrani also arrived there soon afterwards. They were closely watching the movements in the Maratha camp. They were also getting full information about the Marathas through the emissaries of Shuja and Najib. In the beginning of October on learning that Bhau was contemplating moving farther north, the Shah had summoned his entire army from Anupshahar, and it lay encamped along the river Jamuna between Delhi and Barari .

Marathas capture Kunjpura, 17 October 1760

Bhau left his camp at Delhi on 10 October 1760 for Kunjpura. It was a fortified place situated on the western bank of the Jamuna

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**Rajwade*, i, 226, 236, 237, 244, 246; *SPD*, ii, 121; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 24-6-1760; *Husain Shahi*, 58-9; *Atkinson*, vol. iii, part ii, pp. 109, 110, 113; H.R. Nevill, *Gazetteer* (1909 edition), vol. vi, p. 171.

about 150 kilometres north of Delhi. All the supplies of money and material from the Panjab, particularly from Sarhind, had been collected here for the use of the Durrani. These could not be sent to the Afghan camp due to high floods in the river. This was the main temptation for Bhau to undertake the journey. Bhau arrived at Kunjpura on the evening of 16 October.

Najabat Khan, the Governor of the place, had organised two lines of defences. Outside the walls of the town, Abdus Samad Khan, Governor of Sarhind, and Qutab Shah Rohilla, religious precept of Najib, were posted at the head of 2,000 men. Inside the walls Najabat Khan commanded 8,000 Afghans. The Marathas surrounded them in the night and delivered the assault on the morning of 17 October. Both the Afghan chiefs fought well, but Ibrahim Khan Gardi's artillery rained heavy fire upon them. Abdus Samad was killed and Qutab Shah was wounded. The surviving Afghans and Rohillas compelled Najabat Khan to open a gate to admit them inside. The Marathas also rushed in simultaneously. Nearly 1,000 Marathas were killed and wounded. The town and the fort were immediately occupied. Qutab Shah was tortured to death for his having cut off Dattaji's head previously. Najabat Khan died of his wounds. His two sons were captured and perished during the Panipat campaign. His third son Daler Khan managed to escape, and succeeded his father later on.

Enormous booty fell into the hands of the victors. It included 6½ lakhs of rupees in cash, two lakh maunds of wheat and other provisions, 3,000 horses, many camels, large number of guns and stores of munitions*.

Bhau returns towards Panipat, 26 October 1760

The Marathas stayed at Kunjpura for a week, and Bhau allowed them to eat and enjoy themselves and recuperate. The great Hindu

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**SPD*, xxi, 191, 192, 193, 198; *Rajwade*, i, 255, 258, 259, 260, 265; iii, 507; vi, 405; *Miskin*, 226; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 106; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 19-10-1760; *Husain Shahi*, 57; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 78, 186; *Shakir Khan*, 101.

Shejwalkar perhaps following *SPD*, xxi, 192, p. 205 on p. 57 of his book "*Panipat*" states that 5,000 horses were captured by the Marathas.

Tarikh-e-Muzaffari on p. 186 states that Bhau covered the fingers and toes of Najabat Khan with cotton dipped in oil, and set fire to them. Afterwards he was put in a bag soaked in oil and burnt . In every nail of Abdus Samad Khan iron pins were driven.

festival, Dusahra, was celebrated with enthusiasm and rejoicings on 19 October 1760. Bhau established a military base at this place. All of them decided to visit Kurukshetra, 45 kilometres distant, attend religious bath and worship, and then return to Delhi. They left Kunjpura on the morning of 25 October, and in the evening reached the neighbourhood of Taraori situated half way between Kunjpura and Kurukshetra. Here they learnt the news that Ahmad Shah was crossing over the Jamuna at Baghpat. Finding that his rear had been cut, Bhau hurried towards Panipat, 50 kilometres south, and despatched a few contingents in advance to scout for intelligence of the enemy.

Ahmad Shah marches to Panipat

Ahmad Shah lay encamped at Shahdara opposite Delhi when the news of the fall of Kunjpura was reported to him. His wrath was aroused to the utmost. He called his Afghan chiefs and said: "It is unbearable now that while I am still alive my country-men, the Afghans, should be insulted after this fashion. Make every possible effort to find out a ford and inform me, so that I may quickly cross over". A number of men sent out in search of a ford came back disappointed. He ordered his camp to move to the north on 20 October. He made frantic efforts to find a ford. At several places he asked his men to try to cross, but in that attempt the riders and the beasts were all drowned. The villagers failed to help him. He summoned Shuja-ud-daulah and the Rohilla sardars and said: "You are the chiefs of India. It is strange that you do not know the crossing places, but I think a ford must be somewhere (near)".

After four days' constant effort a ford was at last found to the north of Baghpat near Gauripur village, 40 kilometres north of Delhi. It was a narrow passage with deep and dangerous waters on both sides. Consequently bamboo poles with flags on top were fixed in the bed. His men were strictly instructed to pass through this lane only. The Shah crossed the river on 25 October and entered his tents in the garden of Fakhru at Sonepat, 2 kilometres north of the city. Near the western bank it was extremely marshy and muddy. The Shah ordered every one including Shah Vali Khan to break a branch or pull out reeds and grass and throw it on the mud. There was thick overgrowth of *jhau* bushes. The Wazir got down from his horse and cut off a handful of the branches of *jhau*. His eight thousand

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*SPD, xxi, 194, p. 207; *Rajwade*, i, 260, p. 364; *Sarkar*, ii, 271-2.

troopers followed his example. In a while two metres high heap was piled up. Not to speak of men and horses, even elephants carrying cannon tied to their waist passed over it easily. The entire army crossed over in three days on 25, 26 and 27 October. Some boats were also captured on the western bank. These were used to carry heavy baggage across the river by numerous trips. About a thousand men were drowned*.

At Sonepat on 27 October the Shah enquired of Najib: "Where are the troops posted by the Marathas with naked backs to guard the bank of the river? Najib replied that they were a few kilometres northward. Ahmad Shah ordered Shah Pasand Khan, the leader of all the skirmishing parties, to march at once, and not to allow even a single man to escape. Shah Pasand Khan at the head of his 4,000 chosen troopers and guided by Najib's men rushed upon them. Bhau had posted nearly a thousand militia men under Baji Hari Deshpande at the upper ferry of Sonepat. Shejwalkar writes that they were sleeping "soundly on the plains, allowing their horses to roam in the green fields for grazing". They were all cut to pieces†.

On 28 October a body of advanced patrols of the Marathas was overtaken by the Afghans near Sambhalka, 18 kilometres south of Panipat and 28 kilometres north of Sonepat. A sharp action took place in which about 1½ thousand Marathas and one thousand Afghans lost their lives. On this day Ahmad Shah reached Ganaur, 17 kilometres north of Sonepat and 30 kilometres south of Panipat, and stayed there on 28, 29 and 30 October. The Durrani arrived at Sambhalka on 31 October, and fixed his camp in the neighbourhood of Panipat on 1 November 1760‡.

Bhau's arrival at Panipat, 29 October 1760

The Maratha army led by Bhau and his wife Parbatibai who rode beside him on an elephant with a naked sword in her hand had reached Panipat, a town inhabited mostly by Muslims, on Wednesday, 29 October 1760.

**Najibuddaulah*, 37-9; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 187-8; *Delhi Chronicle*, dated 25-10-1760; *Rajwade*, i, 260, 261; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 106.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar says that Ahmad Shah crossed the Jamuna on 26 October. (*Fall*, ii, 283.) I have accepted 25 October on the authority of the *Delhi Chronicle*,dated 25-10-1760.

†*Najibuddaulah*, 39-40; *Shejwalkar*, 59.

‡*Gasiraja Pundit, 21; Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 106; *Rajwade*, i, 260, 261; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 188; *Mujmil*, 129; *Sarkar*, ii, 284.

PART TWO

THE PANIPAT CAMPAIGN

CHAPTER XIV

PANIPAT: THE PHYSICAL SETTING, HISTORIC IMPORT

A bare 33 kilometres due south of Karnal, on the Grand Trunk Road, lies the town of Panipat. Situated close to latitude 29° North and longitude 77° East, this town, 88 kilometres to the north of Delhi, is very near the old bank of the river Jamuna. On all sides, Panipat rises gently upwards towards an old fort which is its highest point, while the low-lying squalid surroundings were, until a few years ago, a receptacle for drainage, a dumping-ground for refuse and a breeding-house for mosquitoes and flies. Surrounded by an old wall, formed by the backs of many houses and pierced by 15 gates, Panipat has its suburbs stretching in all directions, except in the east. The town itself, with its narrow and crooked streets, is criss-crossed by two main bazars. Within the city walls, its principal monument is the 700-years old *Dargah* Qalandar Sahib which was erected, except for the touch-stone pillars of its *Dalan*, by Khizi Khan and Shadi Khan, sons of Alau-ud-din Ghori*.

Over the two hundred years that separate us from the events discussed in these pages, the physical setting of the town has altered in a remarkable way. The vagaries of the changing course of the Jamuna is a case in point. Thus back in 1760-61, the town lay 10 kilometres to the west of the river, which is probably 2 kilometres farther to the west of its present course in some places. Again, the Imperial Mughal road, the *Shah Rah*, from Delhi to Lahore, passed through the town. And even to-day its *Kos minars*, north and

*Buali Qalandar was the son of Salar Faqir-ud-din and is supposed to have been born in the year 602 A.H. (1190 A.D.) The Saint died at the age of 122 years in 724 A.H. (1312 A.D.). The touch-stone pillars, referred to in the text, were erected by one Razaqullah Khan, son of Nawab Muqarrab Khan, a *hakim* in the service of Emperor Akbar. *Gazetteer of Karnal District*, 1883-84, (Lahore, 1884), p. 257. It may be recalled here that on the very morrow of his victory over the Marathas, Ahmad Shah Abdali repaired to the town and made a pilgrimage to Buali's shrine.

south of Panipat, stand as mute witnesses to that once-great highway of men and commerce. The Grand Trunk Road of to-day, 1½ kilometres to the west of the *Shah Rah*, barely grazes along the western side of the town; the railroad alignment is slightly farther, by approximately one kilometre to the west.

Besides the *Shah Rah*, which then cut straight through the town, there was the "Shah Nahar", or the Imperial Canal, flowing along to the west and at a distance of nearly 6 kilometres from the highway. A major part of the Maratha camp was located to the north-west of Panipat and, according to well-accepted popular ballad tradition, Bhau's 700 elephants were stationed at Gharaunda, 17 kilometres to the north of the town. A large concourse of humanity, not to speak of hordes of animals, required abundant supplies of water and the canal at the back of the camp, was probably their principal source.*

The country around Panipat is a vast continuous sandy plain formed over the centuries, and for most part, by the Jamuna silt. It slopes gently from north to south. There are mounds, rather than hills that dot its otherwise even surface, Panipat itself being situated on a small hillock, nearly 30 metres above the level of the surrounding plain. By the side of the Jamuna, and for a long distance in an unbroken monotony, the soil is boggy, marshy and overgrown with rushes and other water plants. As of to-day there are fords over the river, on an average, at a distance of 8 kilometres in days when irrigation canals did not drain away its waters, these must have been far fewer.

The villages around Panipat which were the scene of hostilities between Abdali and the Marathas were Nimbdi, Raja Kheri, Sua Kheri, Kabil Bagh, Chandni Bagh, Ugra Kheri, Ujah, Risalu and Siwah, the list being, by no means, exhaustive. The Maratha front line stretched all the way from Nimbdi, which lies approximately six kilometres to the south-west of the town, to

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*The Karnal District Gazetteer, *op. cit.*, p. 8 makes the point that the Western Jamuna Canal which Nadir Shah found "in full-flow" in 1739, "must have ceased to run almost immediately after this".

Journal of Indian History, XIX, Pt. 3, (Dec. 1940), has, in a brilliant analysis, brought out the fact that while the canal was broken up in 1754, it was repaired by the Mughal Emperor Ahmad Shah. On the basis of strong circumstantial evidence, Professor T.S. Shejwalkar, "*Panipat:* 1761", (Poona, 1946), pp. 80–81, concludes that the canal was in proper trim at the time of the battle of Panipat.

Chandni Bagh, 1½ kilometres directly to the south of it. The Maratha commander, Sadashivrao Bhau, held his troops* 1½ kilometres to the north of Ugra Kheri, itself, 4 kilometres to the south-east of Panipat. The Deccani non-combatants were placed between the town of Panipat and Ugra Kheri. About 4 kilometres to their back lay the village of Raja Kheri.

The Afghan line of battle was nearly twice as long as that of the Marathas and extended from Chhajpur Khurd† on the east, to Siwah on the west. The former lies approximately 1½ kilometres to the north of Nimbdi, or nearly 4 kilometres to the south-east of Raja Kheri. The centre, under Abdali's wazir, was 1½ kilometres due south of Risalu, while the Durrani left wing occupied the plain between Risalu and Siwah. The latter lies 5 kilometres due south of the town. The Abdali ruler's own distinctive Qizalbashi tent, and the reserve he held, lay approximately 2 kilometres behind the battle-line, in the village of Pasina Khurd.

In days gone by the town was of much greater size than it now is and a French traveller, Jacquemont, described it as the largest city, except Delhi, which he saw in northern India. Of late the religious complexion of its population has undergone a remarkable metamorphosis for until the Partition, and the large-scale shift that followed in its wake, Panipat was a predominantly Muslim town with the Muslims, mostly Arabs and Pathans, numbering 17,000 men out of a total of 25,000.‡

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*Accordingto tradition, the site where Bhau commanded was marked by an old mango tree—"Kala Am"—which has now disappeared, its place taken by a stone pillar. The inscription reads, "This Pillar marks the site of the Black Mango Tree near which was fought the Third Battle of Panipat between Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Maratha Confederacy, in 1761".

†Somewhere in this vicinity, the Marathas appear to have cleared the jungle and put up a pillar. For a description a reference may be made to Kali Ranjan Qanungo, "Fragment of a Bhau Ballad in Hindi", in S. R. Tikekar (Editor), "*Sardesai Commemoration Volume*", (Bombay, 1938), pp. 113–27.

‡*The Karnal District Gazetteer, op. cit.*, p. 257. These figures , the compiler has pointed out, are based on the Census of 1868, the tables for which were published in 1875.

Over the past half a century, Panipat's population has more than doubled—from 26,914 (1901) to 54,981 (1951). To-day the Muslims in the town proper number a mere handful. Census of India, 1951, Punjab, "*District Census Handbooks*" Vol. 4, Karnal District (Simla, 1954), p. xv.

Historic Import

Owing to its strategic location, on the highroad from Sarhind and Ferozepur to Delhi, Panipat has been the scene of some of the most historic battles in Indian history. As far back as the Mahabharata, the town was one of the well-known five 'Pata'* or 'Prasthas' which were demanded by Yudhisthira from Daryodhana. Later, the Kaurvas and the Pandavas engaged in their cataclysmic struggle not far away, on the plains of Kurukshetra, 67 kilometres north-west of Karnal. In fact, this entire tract embracing at once Panipat, Kurukshetra and Taraori, or Train, has been the cockpit of Indian history since the very dawn of recorded times. For, with the high mountain ranges on one hand, and the vast stretches of the desert on the other neither too far away it forms, as it were, a bottle-neck through which access to the vast riches of the Gangetic plain, the culminating-point of every invader's ambition, lies. The area itself is so close to Delhi that whenever, and for so long as, the empire which centred in that city existed as more than a mere phantom the political fortunes of one were almost inseparable from the other. Astride the successful invader's highway to the throne of Hindustan at Delhi, Panipat thus inevitably formed an important link in the chain of the marching hordes' communications with their homeland. To keep the road open and the dominion secure, the town had, therefore, to be held and with a firm hand.

Since it commanded the road to Delhi, it had often served as a stepping-stone to an assault on the imperial city. Thus it was with Panipat as a base that Prince Humayun, afterwards Sultan Alauddin Sikandar Shah, plundered Delhi in 1390 and was defeated in its neighbourhood by Abu Bakr Tughlaq. Seven years later the town was held for Tatar Khan who had been prime minister to Ghiasuddin Tughlaq II and later taken by Iqbal Khan. The latter had virtually been ruling in Delhi in the name of the Emperor, Mahmud Shah. In 1398, however, on the approach of Taimur, then on his way to the ruthless, yet inglorious, sack of Imperial Delhi, Panipat was deserted by its holders. Barely a quarter century later Bahlol Lodi's son, Nizam Khan, better known as

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*These included Panipat, Sonepat, 43 kilometres north of Delhi, Indarpat (Delhi), Baghpat 40 kilometres north of Delhi on the eastern bank of the Jamuna, and Talpat 25 kilometres south of Delhi.—*Editor.*

Sikandar Lodi, seized the town, held it ashis *Jagir* and made it his headquarters.*

In the sixteenth century, Panipat stood witness to two of the most decisive battles. The first was that of Babar, the founder of the Mughal Empire, against Ibrahim Khan Lodi, the Pathan king of Delhi, in 1526; the second of his grandson, the young Akbar, out to wrest his father's shaky dominion from the Delhi ruler's Hindu general and Wazir, Hemchandra, thirty years later. The sway of Akbar's successors over their far-flung dominions which embraced, under Aurangzeb, nearly the entire sub-continent, kept open the royal road through Panipat for a continuous and uninterrupted flow of men—and ideas—from Central Asia. It was only under the later Mughals, when the central authority had weakened precipitately, and the outlying provinces had fallen apart that the dominion of the king of kings shrank, in physical area, to a few kilometres outside the capital.

The royal road through Panipat now no longer answered the call of Delhi's master and, in fact, began to echo to the iron hoofs of foreign invaders who trod rough-shod over its great length, to steal and plunder, to loot and hold dominion. The story in the pages that follow belongs essentially to this period of Indian history. One of those remarkable soldiers of fortune who then rode along this highway and whose career truly belongs to Persian, rather than Indian History, was Nadir Shah. With the impotent hollowness of the central Mughal government thus fully exposed, and the loyalty of its provincial governors almost non-existent, the highway lay invitingly open again. Who would ride it next ? Like a refrain in a Greek chorus, the words echoed and re-echoed through its entire length as it were, demanding an answer.

The two Camps

At Panipat, the Maratha army encamped to the north-west and south-west of the town. The old Mughal road, the *Shah Rah* passed directly through Panipat and by pitching their camps, where they did, the Deccanis held complete control over its northern side. It would appear that the famous Shah Nahr was still flowing either

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**Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series, Punjab*, Vol. i, (Superintendent of Government Printing Press, Calcutta, 1908), pp. 316-7.

For a brief, but very useful, account of this period the reader may also refer to the *Karnal District Gazetteer*, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–8.

along, or at a short distance to the west of the camp, acting both as a source of supply of water and a channel for disposal of refuse for the vast numbers that lay there. According to a ballad, still sung, the Marathas spread over a long distance to the north of Panipat.* Thus they had chosen their ground carefully for the canal lay to their back, on the western side, and the Panipat hill to their east. In front stretched a braod, dry and dusty plain. The unfortunate difficulty, however, was that there was hardly any room for manoevure and though the site was well-protected, it could not be changed —and, in fact, never was.

Shortly after the Marathas had pitched their tents, the Bhau began to fortify his position. With his entrenchments spread over a vast plain some 10 kilometres in length, from west to east, and extending for about 4 kilometres in depth, south-wards of Panipat —it was evident that he had included the city within his defence perimeter. The Maratha entrenchments were of a character more formidable and scientific than were usual in the Indian warfare of that period. This was largely due to Ibrahim Khan Gardi at whose instance, initially, the whole plan was thought of and who later designed and executed it. Characteristic of the structure were the low wide angular bastions with their deep embrasures, sloping profiles and thick mud parapets, the solid traverses between the guns, the shortness of the curtains compared with the massive character of the bastions they connected and the completeness of the flanking fire arranged to sweep the various faces. All through running around the entire perimeter was a 20 metres broad and 4 metres deep dry ditch.† The Maratha field artillery, of some 200 pieces, was judiciously distributed so as to make all the four sides easily defensible, the whole camp giving the appearance of a very

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*"Bhau's Ballad", *Bulletin of the Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Vol.* 4, No. 3, 161-85. It is mentioned here that 700 elephants of Bhau were kept at Gharaunda, which is 18 kilometres to the north of Panipat, implying here must have been no dearth of water-supply. Also see Kali Ranjan Qanungo, "Fragment of a Bhau Ballad in Hindi", *Sardesai Commemoration Volume op. cit.*, pp. 113–27. The Deccan College Bulletin gives a more complete version.

†Ibrahim Khan Gardi, trained by Bussy, had imbibed the ideas of western fortification then perfected in Europe by Vauban and Coehorn. For a description, which could not have been very far from reality, a reference may be made to Mirza Moorad Alee Beg ("Gaekwaree"), "*Lalun the Beragun* or *The Battle of Panipat, a Legend of Hindustan,*" Vols. I & II, (Bombay, 1884), p. 35. The work is cited, et. seq., as "Lalun".

well-defended moat. Actually, the country-side, for several kilometres around Panipat, had been denuded of its trees in order to supply timber for propping up the sides of the ditch and supporting the raised gun-platforms*.

In contrast to the Marathas, Abdali changed his camp sites thrice over, to adjust himself to altered conditions. At first 8 kilometres on this side of Panipat, the Durrani line spread along the Pasina Kalan-Dimana line, 4 kilometres south of Siwah and across the *Shah Rah*†. After nearly three weeks during which the Marathas were continually on the offensive and cannonaded Abdali's camp, the Shah retreated to the riverside, 10 kilometres to the south-east, along the river bank to escape "from the air and water of the place rendered foul by such a vast concourse of men and animals"‡. Now, his line stretched along the villages of Behrampur, Bapauli, Mirzapur and Goyenla, while Chhajpur formed the battle-ground between the opposing armies. The Durrani remained here for about a month until, towards the end of December, he moved

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**Sarkar, op. cit.*, p. 221.

It would seem that the Maratha entrenchments were suggestive of the fact—and Bhau had secured his entrenched position by artillery against assault—that they expected the Afghan invader to beat a hurried retreat without venturing to attack them, for according to Maratha calculations, the longer Abdali stayed, the more precarious his position was bound to become.

†Professor Shejwalkar has suggested that Abdali first came directly opposite to Panipat with a view to meeting the Marathas and deciding the contest at one stroke. "But the Marathas entrenching themselves strongly foiled Abdali's plan of taking a quick decision by direct attack", *Shejwalkar, op. cit.*, p. 65. No authority has been cited for this view and one would presume that it is based on conjecture. But surely it would stand to reason that so skilful a general as Ahmad Shah Abdali would not risk a decisive battle in a hurry without fully gauging the situation in which he was placed. Bhau's letter of November 1, saying he had every confidence "of being able, to swallow him up soon", and Krishna Joshi's four days later that—"All our troops are confident that in four to eight days, Abdali, Najib and Shuja would be destroyed", would seem to show that they did not fear a frontal attack from the Shah. V.K. Rajwade, "*Marathyanchya Itihasachin Sadane*", (Bombay), 22 Volumes, Vol. i, Nos. 261, 264 and 265 and *Purandare Daftar*, Vol. i, No. 391 quoted in Sarkar, *op. cit.*, ii, pp. 219–20.

‡*Sarkar, op. cit.*, ii, p. 217. It has also been suggested that in making this decision Abdali seems to have cared for the supply of water, "which was perhaps completely stopped by the Marathas' using up the canal water higher up above Panipat", as well as for the easy communication with the Doab which could be ensured by merely fording the river so as to need no boats to fetch his supplies. *Shejwalkar, op. cit.*, p. 65.

again, and for the last time, to a position slightly—by 2 kilometres—farther to the north from his first camp, astride the Imperial Road to Delhi. This final shift made a corresponding change in the battlefield. It was now, for most part, the villages of Risalu and Nimbdi.

CHAPTER XV

THE TWO ARMIES: THEIR MODES OF FIGHTING, ARMS AND EQUIPMENT

The Marathas

Before we attempt an account of the battle itself it would perhaps be useful to have an accurate picture of the two armed forces that now stood arrayed against each other in their full battle-preparedness, of their modes of fighting, of their arms and equipment. It need hardly be emphasised that both the Marathas and the Durranis were veterans in their respective spheres of waging war. The Marathas, no mean fighters in their own right, were well-known for the lightning swiftness of their cavalry charges. Nor could the fact be easily wished away that they had succeeded to the power and pelf of the Imperial Mughals—in the south, no less than in the north. Their capacity to sustain an all-India empire for long may be questioned—what was irrefutable was their ability to defeat their rivals in arms on the field of battle and thus be a source of great fear and dread to every contemporary Indian power of note. It is on record that even countries outside our borders had solicited their alliances*.

The Maratha system of warfare had undergone perceptible changes since the days of Shivaji, though it has been held that this was not a matter so much of a new mode being evolved as of adding up, in a jumble as it were, new methods to the old kernel. A basic limitation, however, was that by the middle of the eighteenth century

*It appears that the Shah of Persia offered an alliance to the Marathas against "the common enemy". The offer, made in an autograph letter from the Shah, was treated by Raghoba, the Peshwa's brother, in a most casual manner. Actually with this alliance consummated it would have been far more easy to prevent Abdali's aggression, for the mighty Indus would have stretched in front and a hostile Persian army at his flank, while his Indian allies could be neutralised with a small force.

Itihas Sangrah, Aitihasik Sphuta Lekha, Pt. IV, pp. 39–41, quoted in S.N. Sen, "*Military System of the Marathas*" New Edition, (Bombay, 1958), pp. 144–5.

there was no longer in existence, a single army commanded and led by one supreme leader. As a matter of fact, a central command was conspicuous by its absence, instead there was a conglomeration of different armies led by different feudal chiefs*, the latter not always inspired by a common ideal or held together by a (common) cementing bond. This had the added disadvantage that the total armed strength of the state could not be available at any given time for a common exertion: a handicap all the more serious when the country was pitted against a foreign foe.

Whether Shivaji's army had a preponderantly large cavalry force, supported by a relatively smaller infantry, has been seriously disputed†. The weight of available evidence, however, would incline one to the opposite thesis‡. Two facts would support this view. Under Shivaji, the Marathas were fighting for their very hearths and homes, they were on the defensive. Besides, a cavalry trooper, with the horse and the equipment thrown in, was far more costly to maintain than a foot-soldier. Under his successors, and more particularly the Peshwas, the Marathas, now secure in their native land, carried fire and sword into enemy territory. In these far-flung expeditions—designed more for levying tribute, than for organised conquest and administration—a cavalry force was far more useful than the foot soldiers. Hence the near-reversal of the original position. At Panipat, as no doubt earlier at Udgir, the cavalry predominated and, as we will notice later in a detailed breakdown, apart from the foot-musketeers, most of the rest of the army comprised cavalry units§.

The Maratha cavalary consisted of four classes—the 'Khasgi paga', the 'Silhedars,' the 'Ekas' or' Ekandas' and the 'Pendharis'. The 'Khasgi paga', or the Peshwa's private cavalry, were by far the best—a choice-body of troopers, armed, equipped and paid directly by the state. At Panipat, their number has been computed at 6,000,

*It is generally agreed that fedualisam raised its ugly head in the Maratha state after Sambhaji's death. S.N. Sen, *op.cit.*, Introduction, p. xviii, lists this as a major cause of the Marathas decline and downfall.

†According to Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad, Shivaji had a cavalry of 45,000 and an infantry of 10,000. S.N. Sen, "*Siva Chhatrapati*", pp. 136–9.

‡"From the few figures available in the contemporary correspondence of the English factors, it appears that during Shivaji's time the infantry preponderated over the cavalry". S.N. Sen, "*Military System of the Marathas*", *op. cit.*, pp. 63-84.

§Out of the total Maratha force of 45,000 at Panipat—excluding the non-combatants and the camp followers—the cavalry numbered nearly 37,000. For a detailed analysis, see *Infra.*

out of a total of 37,000 under different chiefs*. The 'Silhedars' were paid at a much lower rate than the 'Khasgi paga' and even these paltry allowances were completely stopped as soon as the plundering raids began. The 'Ekas' or the 'Ekandas' were single volunteers who joined the camp but brought with them their own horses and accoutrement, each man's salary being determined strictly in proportion to the value of his horse.

The Pendharis came at the end, but were no means an unimportant constituent of the Maratha cavalary. Actually, they were employed not for fighting, but exclusively for plundering purposes. Thus these predatory hordes who accompanied the army and helped swell its ranks, were intended not to take part in the battle but to ransack and lay waste the enemy country through which the army marched. Not only did they not receive any pay or allowances but, in fact, were expected, in return for the protection they received, to pay to the general or the army commander, a tax called 'palpatti'. The institution had become quite established by the time of Balajirao though he himself is known to favour a strict limiting of the number (of Pendharis) which was attached to each chief†.

The number of non-combatants, attached to a Maratha cavalry regiment, was generally very large, primarily because they cost the

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*Kashi Raj Pandit, "*Ahwal-i-Jang-i-Bhau va Ahmad Shah Durrani*", p. 13, translated by Lieutenant Colonel James Browne in 1791 and published in *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. III, 1799. The writer has used the subsequent edition of Browne's work brought out by H.G. Rawlinson, "*An Account of the Last Battle of Panipat and of the Events leading to it*" (Oxford University Press, 1926), Sir J.N. Sarkar's translation of a part of Kashi Raj's manuscript and published under the heading, "Panipat, 1761" in *Indian Historical Quarterly* (Calcutta), Vol. X. No. 2 (June 1934) pp. 258–73 and as "Events Leading up to the Battle of Panipat, 1761", *Ibid*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (September 1935), pp. 547–58 and at places the original work itself has been translated. Where not specified , Sarkar's translation has been drawn upon and referred, et seq., as Kashi Raj.

†S.N. Sen, "*Military System*", *op. cit.*, pp. 74–6, maintains that the 'Pendharis' formed a source of income to the Maratha generals, that the employment of these trained robbers was a "time-honoured custom" among the ancient Hindu princes, as under the Mughals, that among the Maratha chiefs, Holkar employed the largest number of 'Pendharis'.

Dr. Sen has cited two letters, *Peshwa's Diaries*, Vol. IX, pp. 324–5, of Madhav Rao I granting permission to some of his Sardars for the adoption of this lucrative practice.

Unless otherwise specified S.N. Sen's "*Military System of the Marathas*" has been cited in subsequent pages.

state very little—even their nominal salaries being not always regularly paid. A rough estimate of their relative strength may be gauged from the fact that in a cavalry force of 700, there were only 90 Bagirs of the Khasa paga, the rest being Silhedars, while the number of non-combatants attached was just a little less than 200*.

The Maratha horsemen were lightly equipped and scantily clad. Ahmad Shah Abdali often referred to them, no doubt somewhat contemptuously as naked-backed†.

The cavalry were generally armed with muskets and matchlocks, swords and targets, spears and lances, daggers and clubs—and even bows and arrows. The muskets and matchlocks were used, for most part, in bush fighting, but the chief dependence of the average soldier was on his sword and target. Thus in their charge, the cavalry would rely more on their swords than on their *banduks* or muskets partly because the latter took a much longer time to load‡.

A projectile called the war rocket, which was an offensive weapon, was commonly used by the Marathas, even as it was by Abdali's Indian allies. The rocket was carried on camel-back, with the rocketeer mounted by the side, and its greatest use lay in the fact that it frightened the war elephants who scampered away in a stampede. At Panipat, it appears, its dread was very considerable: "As for a musket ball, the heroes cared not what it might do, and in

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*S.N. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 68 analyses atlength a document (Peshwa's Diaries, III, pp. 166–7) dated 1744-5, giving details of the composition of a cavalry force in the Peshwa's service and the terms of its payment. The commander of this force was Ranoji Bhonsale and its fighting strength 700.

†*Nur-ud-din*, p. 39, reports Abdali asking his officers, after he had forded the Jamuna at Baghpat, "Where are the troops posted by the Marathas with naked backs to guard the bank of the river?".

There are similar references in Kashi Raj.

‡John Henry Grose *'A Voyage to the East Indies'* (London, 1766), pp. 80–1, "Their (Marathas) swords are, generally speaking, of an admirable temper, and they are all well-trained up to the exercise of them, so that on all occasions on battle, they quit their musket, and betake themselves to them with great success".

The crude tuype of *banduka* or matchlock was known as the 'toda', the man wielding it was the 'todedar' whose equipment consisted of a powder flash, bullet pouches, flint and steel.

A very useful description of Maratha weapons, with illustration, is given in B.K. Apte, "The Maratha Weapons of War", *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, Vol. xix, Nos. 1–2 (1958), pp. 106-124.

that scene of carnage and slaughter the only dread entertained by the renowned and gallant combatants was a cannon ball, or the flight of a rocket*".

A close rival to the cavalry and, at Udgir—and more certainly at Panipat—its senior partner, was the Maratha artillery. Diverse opinions have been held as to the actual contribution of the atrtillery, and more specifically of the Gardis, who wielded it, to the successful waging of that battle. A pertinent question that may be asked in this context is, whether, in fact, its use had been properly dovetailed into the traditional Maratha cavalry tactics, to evolve a harmonious blend? Or, in reverse, it remained a mere hybridization between two essentially irreconcilable methods, which yielded nothing, but disaster. Since the issues raised are of great significance a closer scrutiny may be attempted here.

That Shivaji had a regular department of artillery, called the 'Topkhana' and an ammunition store, called the 'Darukhana', is well-known. So also the fact that he oft-time purchased his requirements of artillery and ammunition from the Portugese besides maintaining his own store of some light pieces of Indian—made 'Jejalas' and 'Zamburaks' or 'Shutarnals†'.

A word here about these indigenous weapons may not be out of place. The "jejala" was a wall-piece or a swivel-gun. The Marathas used this fire-arm from the ramparts. As it was light, it could be easily directed against the approaching enemy. The bore of the "jejala" being small, the ball which it fired gathered good momentum. This was also carried on the camel's back to the field. The 'Zambura', also called the "jambura" was a small light gun, as was the "shutarnal". The latter was mounted on a camel. There were two methods of operating the gun from the camel's back. In one, the man on the camel loaded and discharged the gun, in the other the camel was made to kneel down before firing the gun. It is not quite clear which of the two methods was employed by the Marathas‡.

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*Muhammad J'afar Shamlu, "*Manazil-ul-Futuh*" in H.M. Elliot and John Dowson, (Ed.) "*The History of India, as told by its own Historians*", (London, 1877), 8 Vol . Vol. viii, (pp. 144–57). This work gives only a part of the translation of the whole and is referred to in subsequent pages, as Muhammad J'afar Shamlu.

†S.N. Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–100, puts forth the view that in the Deccan, the Portugese figured at one time as the great masters of artillery and that Shivaji "might have been consciously copying their methods".

‡For details please refer to B.K. Apte, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–8.

Important as it had no doubt been under Shivaji and his immediate successors, the artillery gained greater recognition under the Peshwas. Thus the first in the line, Baji Rao, is said to have built his own foundry, while Madhav Rao I established a cannon ball factory at Ambegavan, near Votur, and another at Poona, for manufacturing cannon. For supplies of ammunition, however, they were still dependent on outside help and provision was made for these purchases in the treaties which the Marathas concluded with other European nations.

Despite their early start, and some indigenous manufacture had already developed, the Marathas did not attain any high degree of standardisation, not to say perfection, in their finished products, if accounts of contemporary writers are any true guide. Thus we are informed that the guns of the Maratha army, though tolerably well-cast, had "very clumsily and badly constructed" carriages. Nor were the cannon made of any precise calibre, but "cast indifferently by all diameters", with the ball afterwards "adapted to the bore". The net result was that inasmuch as they used cast shot, and not one of wrought iron, the many angles on the surface of the shot destoryed the smoothness of the bore, nor could they be fired with that precision with which a cast ball could be*. Actually, as more recent writers have affirmed, the Marathas cast their heavy artillery and shots with the aid of local iron-smiths. Being of inferior calibre they often broke when fired†. No wonder then that the performance of Maratha artillery, at Panipat, was anything but creditable. An eye-witness formed a poor impression indeed, "Maratha guns being very large and heavy and their level not easily altered, their shot began to pass over our troops and fell a mile in rear"‡.

The fact that they were rather unwieldy and somewhat clumsy made their transport a major problem. Some pen portraits by men who saw the park of artillery move at first-hand make poor reading. The gun carriages were awkwardly built while the guns themselves, of all sorts and dimensions, and laden with heaps of stores and baggage, trudged along, at a snail's pace, driven wearily by "a hundred or a hundred and fifty bullocks in a string of pairs". Some-

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*William Henry Tone : "*Illustrations of some Institutions of the Maratha People*", (Calcutta, 1818) pp. 54-5.

†B.K. Apte, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

‡Kashi Raj in H.G. Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, p. 35. The inferiority of the Maratha artillery is said to have been responsible for the conversion of a sure victory at Arras into a defeat. Forrest, "*Selections from State Papers*", Maratha Series, pp.227–9.

times, at difficult passes, apart from the large contingent of bullocks, even elephants had to be employed to push the heavy pieces from behind*. Actually, carrying these guns to the field was a perpetual problem with the Marathas. Thus we know that Bhau's forces, on their way to the north, had to halt for more than a month on the north bank of the Chambal largely because his heavy artillery, and stores, took a long time to be carried over the deep ravines intersecting both banks of the river†. Besides, the problem of feeding this vast animal population of the Maratha camp must have been stupendous, especially when driven to sore straits as at Delhi, and later at Panipat itself ‡.

The men who handled the park of artillery, the trained battalions of infantrymen in the Maratha army, were the 'gardis'§. Their leader, Ibrahim Khan, played an important role in the battle of Udgir—and later at Panipat. His predecessor, in the Peshwa's service, was Muzaffar Khan who, changing his masters ever so often, had also seen service under the Nizam and the Nawab of Savnur¶. Ibrahim Khan had been personally trained by the celebrated French General, Bussy. With his appointment the Maratha "Topkhana" or the separate department of artillery was considerably improved. Later, the Maratha victory at Udgir brought Ibrahim very close to the person of Sadashivrao Bhau who put great trust

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*Major Alexander Dirom, "*A Narrative of the Campaign in India*", (London, 1793), pp. 10–12.

Also see B.K. Apte, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

†Sarkar, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 174.

‡*SPD*, xxvii, 258. The writer reported, from Delhi, in September, 1760, that the horses had "no stamina left in them" and that the soldiers were "starving". Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 186 makes the same point. "His (Bhau's) residence in the dry sterile north-western subrubs of Delhi (the Shalimar gardens), far away from the friendly and fertile old base in the Jat country, caused the draught oxen of his guns and munition-tumbrils to die of famine and sickness".

§The term"Gardi" is said by the French translator of Ghulam Husain Khan's "Siyar-ul-Mutakharin", to be derived from the Arabic "*Garbi*" or "Western"; but the word "guard", in its French, English or Portugese form may be regarded as a more likely source. For a more detailed reference see Elliot and Dowson, *op. cit.*, p. 155, Foot-note 1.

¶Muzaffar Khan had taken part in a conspiracy against Sadashivrao Bhau and was executed. He and his men had also taken a hand in the political intrigues of Raghoba. Maratha historians have highlighted this notoriously unruly and troublesome behaviour of the 'gardis'. Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 113–4 as also foot-note, p. 114.

and confidence in him and accepted his advice without demur. And thus, though the worst kind of mercenaries and a heterogenous lot, drawn from all parts of India, who were attracted more by personal prospects of pay and preferment, and professed no loyalty to the masters they served, the Gardis came to play a pivotal role in the actual campaign.

It must also be borne in mind that, as advocates of a new-fangled mode of warfare, they inevitably provoked a lot of hostility from the "old-guard" traditionalists in the Maratha camp. For the gardis, relying for their success on superior artillery and firearms, sought pitched battles which the advocates of the old hit-and-run school scrupulously avoided. Besides, recipients of a preferential treatment, they were paid better salaries, and more regularly, regardless of the privations of the rest of the army or the state of the Peshwa's treasury*. In fact, the Gardis were referred to, somewhat contemptuously, no doubt, as "*topeewalas*", a term which was used for the westerners because of the hat ("*topee*") which was their distinctive head-gear. In the sum-total thus there was bound to be a lot of jealousy and bad blood against them. No wonder they were so thoroughly unpopular.

The Durrani and his Allies

In terms of their organisation, arms and equipment the men of Ahmad Shah Abdali, and of his Indian allies, presented a sharp contrast. It need hardly be stressed that Ahmad Shah was himself essentially a soldier and that most of his attention was devoted to his army which was the mainstay of his political power. The Shah himself is said to have been quite skilful in the manufacture of guns and, in 1751, during the siege of Nishapur, he is actually said to have designed a gun which, firing balls weighing 15 kilograms contributed materially to the conquest of that place. Two other guns, of larger calibre and length, and capable of throwing balls of 17½ kilograms each, were cast at Lahore in 1757 by Shah Nazir under the orders of the Shah and the personal direction of the

*We are told that on the day of the battle, Ibrahim Khan rode up to the Bhau and said, "You were highly displeased with me because every month I used to take from you, with bold insistence, order ("Chittha") for the cash payment of our salary. This month your treasure has been looted and we have got no order of payment". *Kashi Raj*, p. 24.

Wazir, Shah Vali Khan. Both these guns were used by the Abdali in the battle of Panipat against the Marathas*.

The Durrani army was divided into the Askar-e-Munazzam, literally the organised or the Regular army, and the Askar-i-Ghair Munazzam, the unorganised or the Irregular. The former constituted nearly one-third of the entire army while the latter, also called the Fauj-e-Kushada literally the open army, or the Khwanin-e-Sawaran or the tribal horse-riders, comprised the remaining two-thirds†.

Of the Shah's regulars, nearly three-fourths were cavalry. They were tall, heavy men, on strong, long-backed horses, unencumbered with defensive armour. For their persons some had a mail-shirt or a buff leather jacket, with a helmet or chain-twisted turban as head-gear. As for arms, they had short, heavy matchlocks and swords, while some carried flint carbines slung at the back. Sometimes there were spears, shields and daggers in use too. There were also the long scymitar and the flint pistols or battle-axe at the saddle-bows but not bows and arrows, or stone catapults‡. In contrast to the Marathas, the Shah's cavalry had greater facility with and actually preferred, the use of the matchlock or the carbine to the sword.

A fourth of the regular troops in the army belonged to the infantry arm. As a rule these men wielded swords while some carried matchlocks too. In times of emergency, and more particularly in the fording of rivers, etc., the cavalry men were required to carry footmen.

The pride of place, in the Shah's army, however, went to the artillery which, for numerical purposes, was regarded as a part of the cavalry and was included in it. Of the artillery, nearly two-thirds were heavy guns while the remaining one-third were light guns. The heavy guns were drawn by horses, the light ones, known as

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*One of these was the "Zamzama", later known as "Bhangian Wali Top", after the name of its captor, Hari Singh Bhangi. The Zamzama, 4½ metres long, with the aperture of its bore 3 decimetres, used to stand in front of the Panjab University Buildings at Lahore. The second gun, referred to, was lost while the Afghan army was on its way to Kabul from Panipat. Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

†*Ibid*, 359.

‡It is said that at Udgir, the Maratha soldiery employed, apart from other weapons, bows and arrows and among the missiles, 'hat dhounda' or stones. S.N. Sen, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. xvii.

'Zamburaks' or 'Shahbeen' and 'Shabang', were carried singly, or in twos and threes, on the backs of camels. Easily manoeuvreable, they could be moved from one position to another and discharge their deadly fire into the ranks of the enemy, whenever required to do so, and without having to be lowered to the ground. We know that these camel swivels played an important , nay a decisive, role at Panipat in mowing down the Marathas*.

Roughly corresponding to the 'Pendharis' in the Maratha army, there were the 'tabinan', or the irregular attendants among the Afghans. On an average, each Durrani trooper was accompanied by two to four of these hangers-on. The horses and armour of these irregulars, however, were not unlike those of the Durranis themselves. The men were well-built and tall and had good Turkish horses who galloped and raided with ease. As a rule in each battle, it were the Durrani regulars who fought at first while later the irregulars completed the enemy's ruin by plundering†.

Of the Shah's Indian allies two bear a mention here because of their relatively well-trained and well-equipped forces. These were the Rohilla leader Najib-ud-daulah, and Shuja the Nawab Wazir of Avadh. The former had organised his regiments in what was some rough and ready imitation of the European system. The men were dressed in 'Ungurkha' and turban and were armed with the matchlock and the sword, but the former had a bayonet fixed to it. They were taught to load and fire systematically by order and were drilled in some simple, but nonetheless useful manoeuvres by Persian words of command. Among his infantry were a sizeable number of trained sappers who were always handy in the field. At Panipat, Najib had a very generous supply of war rockets too and these proved quite useful in the startegy which he was to adopt.

Shuja-ud-daulah had a small but select corps of men, both in the infantry and the cavalry‡. His Gosain troops were, in discipline and equipment, the envy of many. They had their heavy straight Indian broadsword, the mace, the battle-axe, the dagger, the pistol

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*The Shah is said to have as many as 700 of these camel swivels in the first year of his reign; this number must have gone up considerably in the quarter of a century that he ruled. Ganda Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

†*Kashi Raj*, 13.

‡While sending Najib to win over Shuja to his side Abdali told the envoy that he was not interested in whether their army would increase by the Nawab Wazir's joining them; the aim was to wean him away from the Marathas. Kashi Raj, Khalsa College, Amritsar, Mss.), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

and the short massive iron shafted lance. His footmen, the "Poorbeea Peyadas" who were dressed in quilted cotton jackets, wielded round shields and sharp *talwars* while some carried huge iron-bound and spiked clubs and long two-handed swords*.

A Comparison

Having had a close look at the two armies, their composition, arms and modes of fighting, it may not be out of place here to make a comparison. That the Turks, whether regulars in the army or non-combatant camp-followers, were hardy soldiers, and born horsemen, goes without saying. What was striking was that they were also amenable to training and discipline in a high degree. Their strict enforcement of order "in camp and in the battle-field, the rigid punishment of the least disobedience in any subordinate, the control of every officer's movements according to the plan of the supreme chief, the proper gradation of officers forming an unbroken chain between the generalissimo and the common soldier, the regular transmission of his (Ahmad Shah Abdali's) orders by an efficient staff organisation" have been commended by a sympathetic historian as without parallel in any other contemporary armed force in Asia†. In contrast, the Maratha generals and soldiers, were not easily amenable to discipline. Individualists to the very marrow of their bones, they were strangers to team-work so essential for a fighting force—on or off the battle-field.

A contemporary observer of the scene has given a graphic description of Ahmad Shah Abdali's review of his troops near Ballabgarh, in March 1757:

> "The Shah advanced alone amidst the ranks of his slaves, riding a horse.....There were four bodies of slaves, each of 3,000 men, one division in front, one behind, and one on each side. Each division of them wore a hat of a different style. It was prohibited for a slave belonging to one division to ride with another division; he must keep with his own set.....on pain of such severe beating that he was left half-dead. They rode fast horses of Kabuli breed, and guided them each in his own station, with a grave demeanour. They moved at the

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*The writer has drawn some of these details from Lalun, *op. cit.*, pp. 159–61.

†Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, 208.

Kashi Raj, 17 tells us that Ahmad Shah's command was "like that of God and Destiny, what individual had the power to deviate from it?".

distance of a musket-shot from the Shah's person, all their faces turned towards him. The Shah rode alone in the middle with an open space around him*".

In contrast, the Maratha camp presented a none too orderly sight, with a lot of confusion all around:

".....And about four the ensuing morning the signal for moving is given by the great 'naubat' or drum, on the second beating of which the Biniwala (Quarter-Master General) sets out with the Peshwa's flag escorted by his own corps.....With him proceed parties from all the different chieftains with their respective flags, followers, bazar, infantry, artillery, etc. These all proceed promiscuously in vast multitudes and without the smallest order till they see the Peshwa's dal flag, which is erected in a situation where the convenience of water is the principal consideration.....The only part of the camp that carries the appearance of regularity is the Bazar, which generally forms a very long and broad street to the tent of the chief, whereas the rest of the camp is so straggled and destitute of all order that it is a most difficult thing to get through the crowds of camels, bullocks, horses, etc. to the interior of the camp, which subjects them to the utmost confusion in case of an alarm...†".

Discipline in the two armed forces may also be borne out by their general bearing and get-up and two revealing pictures are brought out here. Thus on May 31, 1754 when Malhar Rao Holkar arrived opposite Delhi, as an ally of Imad-ul-mulk, a body of his troops forded the Jamuna and plundered the 'Katra' of Nizam-ud-din Auliya's tomb and some other places and also burnt the Khurma mart. Imad, on hearing this, protested. "What is this?", he is reported to have asked, "Why are your soldiers plundering the city?" Malhar replied, "They are soldiers. They always do it‡".

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*Ghulam Husain Samin, "*Halat-i-Amdan-i-Ahmad Shah Durrani dar Hindustan dar* 1169 *Hijri*", translated by W. Irvine, "Ahmad Shah and the Indian Wazir, Imad-ul-*M*ulk, 1756-57", *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. xxxvi (1907), pp. 13-18, 43-51, 55-70. *Ibid.*, p. 55–6.

The author (Ghulam Husain Samin) was present in Agra and Mathura during the Afghan ruler's fourth invasion of India (1756–7) and had personal knowledge of many of the political transactions which took place at the time.

†Sir C. W. Malet's "*Memoranda on the Maratha Army*", written from the Maratha camp at Kharda, March 1795, quoted in Sarkar, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 210–11.

‡"*Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi*", 133. This work gives a detailed account of the reign of Emperor Ahmad Shah of India.

An instance of a complete lack of co-ordination among Maratha commanders may also be mentioned in this context. This relates to May 1758 when Vithal Shivdeo was ordered to Patna by Raghunath Rao, the Peshwa's brother, then campaigning in the north. Instead of obeying the order, the Maratha commander marched to Delhi and looted its outskirts, arrested the Prince and took him to his camp. Reporting this to Sadashivrao Bhau, at Poona, Antaji Mankeshwar confessed that Vithal Shivdeo "cannot be reproached" because he was backed by Malharrao Holkar and that both Raghunathrao and the Wazir were brooding over the incident*.

In sharp contrast, the Shah is reported to have inflicted exemplary punishment on some of his soldiers who had committed irregularities in the camp of Shuja-ud-daulah, his much-sought-after ally, on the eve of the battle of Panipat :

> "The Shah, hearing of this, had 200 of them seized upon, and, having had their noses bored through with arrows, and strings passed through the holes, they were led in this condition, like camels, to Shuja-ul-daulah,.....to be put to death or pardoned, as he should think proper"†.

Selections from the Peshwa Daftar, xxvii, 220.

†Kashi Raj in H.G. Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PRE-BATTLE SKIRMISHES

Between November 1, when the two armies encamped opposite each other, and January 14, when the final battle was fought, intervened two-and-a-half months of a long, albeit not always patient wait. Eyeing each other with mounting distrust and suspicion and growing increasingly restless for some decisive action, there were brushes and skirmishes nearly every day between the reconnaissance patrols and foraging parties of the two sides and sometimes exchange of fire from distantly-mounted guns*. Of these daily bouts probably the most important were three—those of November 19 and of 22 and of December 7.

November 19 and 22

On November 19, after the Maratha entrenchments had been in position for a week or so and their field artillery mounted on earthen ramparts, Fath Ali Khan, brother of Ibrahim Khan Gardi, made a night attack on the Shah's camp. The Gardis had taken with them a few pieces of artillery and in the ensuing encounter with the Shah's men had perforce to leave behind 30 banners and a few guns†.

Three days elapsed before the next encounter. On November 22 at dusk, when the Marathas were busy with their lunar eclipse rites, the Wazir Shah Vali Khan on patrol duty that day strayed to

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*K*ashi Raj*, 17 reads: "Every day at dawn the troops rode out with the guns, and an exchange of artillery fire took place; in the evening they returned to their camps. Fighting of this type took place for two months and twenty-two-days."

†Imam-ud-din al-Husaini, "*Tarikh-i-Husain Shahi*", p. 66. Ganda Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 251 states that Fath Khan, and his men, "succeeded in carrying away (from the Afghan camp) a few pieces of artillery." This version is probably based on the *Delhi Chronicle*, for November 21, which reads: "News that the Gardis under Bhau had made a night attack on Shah's camp and carried off cannon from the trenches." 'Trenches' here may refer to Maratha entrenchments—and the Gardis had dragged some guns along to the opposite side.

a large *baoli*—south-west of Panipat—and immediately facing the right wing of the Maratha camp. The Wazir, evidently unprepared for any trouble and completely off his guard, for he had only a small escort with him, was suddenly surprised by an overwhelming Maratha force. A close combat followed in which 3,000—4,000 men are said to have fallen dead and wounded. Owing to their superior numbers, the Marathas were at first victorious, but when reinforcements reached the Wazir, it was already nightfall. The Durranis, however, are said to have fallen on the Maratha rear as the latter retired to their camp*.

To gauge the importance of these initial encounters it would be necessary to bear in mind the fact that throughout November the spirits and the morale of Maratha troops, no less than that of their commanders, was very high. The tone may be said to have been set by Bhau's letter of November 1,

> "Grain sells at 2 to 2½ seers in his (Ahmad Shah Abdali's) camp. I have every confidence of being able to swallow him up very soon".

and even more so of Krishna Rao Joshi's , four days later :

"The Yavan (invader) is greatly frightened, and dare not come on. Our troops are every day slaying 50 to 100 of his men and carrying off their camels and horses. His food supplies have been stopped, so that flour sells at three seers, gram at four seers and ghee at ½ seer to the Rupee, while in our camp the rates are wheat 16, gram 12 and ghee 2½ seers. All our troops, are confident that in four to eight days, Abdali, Najib and Shuja would be destroyed. Abdali is called 'the King of Kings'.... but having come within four miles of us, he has sat down for eight days and dare not make a demonstration of his valour. Hence, our army is in high spirit. Abdali's route to home is blocked, he cannot fight with hope of success, he cannot sit

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*According to Kashi Raj, the Wazir had issued on a 'pleasure excursion', the number of Marathas who fell on him was "ten to fifteen thousand" the action lasted "three to four gharis" and Abdali's troops slew "a large number" of the Marathas. *Kashi Raj*, pp. 17-18.

According to Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, p. 222, the Wazir's casualties were about 600, that of the Marathas about half that number. The Marathas are also said to have captured over 100 horses. *Selections from Peshwa Daftar*, xxi, No. 197, gives 950 casualties for the Afghans, 160 for the Marathas.

According to *Delhi Chronicle*, for December 9, "12,000 men" had been slain or wounded on the two sides.

down idly as he has not the necessary food supply. He is bewildered.*"

The tempo was sustained by a false analysis which mistook Abdali's initial restraint and strict orders to his troops not to stick out their necks too far as indicative of some inherent weakness or inability to fight. That the Marathas were "on the aggressive" is further borne out by the fact, alluded to earlier, that Abdali had to shift his armed camp from its original position by the end of November†.

December 7

The third major encounter, between the armed forces of the two sides, took place after Abdali had moved to his new positions near the river side and thus a little farther away from the range of heavy Maratha artillery fire and in a somewhat more difficult terrain. It was on December 7 when, during the day, the Marathas had moved some of their guns to a position opposite the Rohillas in Abdali's camp. But there was no particularly sharp exchange of fire before the evening set. No sooner, however, was it dusk than the Rohillas led by Sultan Khan, brother of Najib-ud-daulah, sallied forth and with 10,000 horse and 5,000 foot fell upon the enemy positions‡. The Maratha horsemen, guarding the guns, were scattered away. But before long Balwantrao Mehendele charged the intruders with his men, and "fought like a Rustam". A sharp, brisk battle continued "upto one 'pahar' after nightfall." The Gardi artillery, in action, mowed down 2,000—3,000 Rohillas. In the last charge a 'Zamburak' ball accidentally hit Balwantrao, claiming his life. A little while later troops, on both sides retraced their steps||.

**Rajwade*, i, 261, 264 and 265, and *Purandare Daftar*, i, 391, quoted in Sarkar, *op,cit.*, ii, 219-20.

†*Supra*, pp. 179-80.

‡Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-8, has put forth the view that the clash was brought about deliberately by the Marathas who, tired of their "futile inactivity" for days, "hit upon a plan to call them (Durranis) out." The plan was to clear of bush and jungle a small piece of land and bring out their movable cannon there, and having done so "to challenge the other side to come out and dare battle."

||*Kashi Raj*, p. 18. *Nur-ud-din*, p. 45 computes the number of Rohillas at 2,000 horse and 3,000 foot, insists that "the whole of the Maratha army, and horse" came out of their camp surprised and confused, beleives that the Rohilla foot-soldiers reached the Maratha entrenchments and tried to get into

(*Continued on page 197*)

The Marathas, despite their victory in pushing back the Rohillas, sustained a major loss in the death of Balwantrao—a near relation, personal friend and close confidante of Sadashivrao Bhau*.

Maratha chroniclers make out that Bhau set great store by the advice tendered by Balwantrao and this was probably responsible for a lot of bickerings and jealousy between the Maratha commander and other members of the Peshwa's family on the one hand and army leaders such as Malharrao Holkar on the other. Whatever the truth of these insinuations, it is hardly necessary to stress the fact that in Balwantrao's death Bhau sustained a great personal bereavement apart from the loss of a brave soldier and a fearless general†.

While the significance of the action fought on December 7 cannot be gainsaid, if only for the death of Balwantrao‡, it is difficult to accept the view that "if the Abdali had driven home this individual thrust of the Rohillas....the trenches would have been completely carried and the 14th of January anticipated by five weeks§". It is true that after this date the Maratha fortunes precipi-

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(*Continued from page 196*)
them, and opines that only 1,500 Rohillas were killed while "the remnant retired fighting."

Tarikh-i-Husain Shahi, *op.cit.*, 66 mentions the fact that 40—50,000 Marathas surrounded the Rohillas, and that 6,000 of the latter were killed in the fighting.

Also see Ghulam Ali Khan Azad, "*Khazanah-e-Amirah*", 107. This work was completed in 1762, about one year after the battle of Panipat, and gives a useful account of the invasions of Ahmad Shah Durrani upto 1762.

*Khazanah-e-Amirah, *op.cit.*, 107 describes Balwantrao as a wife's brother of Bhau. Sarkar, footnote, in *Journal of Indian History*, XI, No. 3, September 1935, *op. cit.*, 549, repudiates this suggestion and calls him Bhau's cousin-brother.

†K. N. Sane (Editor), "*Bhau Sahebanchi Bakhar*" (Poona, 1932) gives three instances. On page 105 Bhau and Balwantrao "concerted together", on page 118 the two again "settled their plan" and on page 125 Malhar said (to Bhau) "Ask Balwantrao about this, I cannot think of any advice." This work, hereafter, is referred to as Bhau Saheb Bakhar, pages given are of the published work, not of the mss.

Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, pp. 68-9, repudiates the suggestion that Balwantrao fanned and fomented the family differences in the Pershwa's family and always made Bhau take a step contrary to the advice of Malharrao and others.

‡"This battle was fought well, but due to Balwant's fall, the enemy became triumphant". Nana Fadnis in Rajwade, *op.cit.*, i, 272 note, quoted in Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, 224.

Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 69, joins issues with Sarkar on his interpretation of Nana Fadnis and bemoans the fact that such "a partial understanding of the Marathi documents" makes him take a gloomier view than is actually warranted.

§Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, 224-5, footnote.

tately sagged, that their morale was at a low ebb and that slowly, but very surely, with increasing and resistless pressure everything went against the Bhau and his army. Yet to maintain that as early as December, the Marathas could have been completely routed, and then in a surprise encounter of this nature, is to take a very pessimistic view indeed—and one not easy to substantiate. The action, in question, itself showed that the Rohillas were beaten back and their casualties were very heavy indeed. Actually, an eye-witness account would have us believe that but for nightfall, the Marathas could have chased the enemy to their own camp and completely destroyed them*. Again, the battle, five weeks later, was to prove that the Maratha army was not completely down and out and could give a good account of itself.

December 17: Death of Govindpant

Despite their brave fight, the skirmish of December 7 did, in retrospect, prove to be the beginning of an uninterrupted series of misfortunes for the Marathas. Thus within less than two weeks, they suffered a major calamity in the death of Govindpant Bundele, the Maratha revenue chief in the north who had been earmarked for a key role in Bhau's strategic planning: of cornering the Abdali at Panipat and making things difficult for his allies. Thus he was to harry the upper Doab, stop the grain convoys which Najib's men were sending from this area to the Shah's camp, capture Najib's posts in the Mirat (Meerut) division and "even to threaten to cross the Ganges and sack the homes of the Rohillas and Shuja's northern districts." This apart, he was expected to provide the vast numbers of the Maratha army, and its countless hangers-on, at Panipat with the necessary wherewithal—both in terms of money and provisions†.

**Autobiographical Memoir of the Early Life of Nana Farnavis*", translated from the the Marathi by Colonel John Briggs which originally appeared in "*The Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society*", 1827, Vol. ii, Part i, reproduced with an introduction and published as an Appendix to A. Macdonald's, "*Memoir of the Life of the Late Nana Farnavis*", edited and with an Introduction by H.G. Rawlinson, (Oxford University Press, 1927) p. 169. Hereafter, quoted as Nana Farnavis.

The words, in translation, read "had it not been for the approach of darkness, we should all have been destroyed on that night"; actually they should read "..... We should all have destroyed them on that night."

†Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, 220. We are told that throughout the Panipat campaign, nay even before starting for it, Bhau had demanded money of Govindpant. *SPD*, XL, 129.

The heavy task thus set Govindpant would have been a most difficult assignment even for the best of commanders, with an efficient and well-trained army by his side. The gentleman entrusted with it now was a man of three scores and five, who most of his life had been a *Malakari*, or a revenue-collector*. To expect him, at the fag end of his life, to turn into a valiant, dashing captain of war, harassing a far superior enemy with a force of "rustic levies and second-rate Maratha light horse" at his command, was a little too much†. It smacked of bad planning and lack of familiarity in dealing with human material. That the task was extremely important and imbued with great urgency for the execution of Bhau's brilliantly conceived plan of starving out Abdali's army at Panipat by cutting off its supplies and of weakening him further by making his Indian allies, Shuja and the Rohillas, desert him, needs no emphasis‡. Nor could one deny the fact that the upper Doab was now, in November-December, 1760, free of large, organised armies and that Govindpant, operating in an area to Abdali's rear, alone could do something in the matter. Bhau himself, for instance, could not have sent a part of his troops to undertake this work. Abdali lay athwart his path and it was becoming increasingly impossible to bypass him towards Delhi or to defeat him, by direct attack in an open, pitched battle. Despite all this—the urgency of the task and Govindpant's relatively advantageous situation from which to operate—the fact cannot be gainsaid that he was not a fit enough means to discharge such an onerous responsibility, so heavy a commitment. In fact, it may be said to his credit that, with all his limitations, he did his best and that his best was not a poor performance. Thus it is on record that by early in December his

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As early as November 15, Bhau in urgent need of manufacturing 400 maunds of powder and 100 maunds of shot, had written to Gonvindpant "for every ounce of ready-made munition he could send immediately." Rajwade, *op.cit.*, i, 268, in Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, 226.

**Nur-ud-din*, 49, gives Govindpant's age as 80 years, Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, 227, as "over sixty." The writer has accepted Professor Shejwalkar's (p. 109) sixty-five as most accurate.

†Bhau seems to have impressed this fact repeatedly on Govindpant. Thus in one of his letters he wrote: "You are not now only a *Malakari*. You have with you as many troops as with a sardar." Rajwade, *op.cit.*, i, 244, quoted in Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 109.

‡"The Bhau's strategy was eminently sound in theory; it only needed able instruments to execute it and an adequate supply of foodand munitions to outlast his opponents". Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, 220.

depredations in the Doab had seriously affected Abdali's supplies. We are told that grain had become scarce in the Shah's camp, that a kilogram of coarse flour could not be procured even for two rupees, that his men were extremely distressed at their plight and told their general that they feared they would all be "destroyed without any battle.*" Again, the news of Govindpant's advance up the Doab had spread consternation among the Abdali's Indian allies "for the safety of their homes†." Was that not a rich enough tribute for the old revenue collector's discharge of his duty?

But that was by no means all. Govindpant had managed to send Bhau two lakhs of rupees and, at Delhi, handed its Maratha governor, Naro Shankar another four lakhs and twenty thousand. He is even said to have been busy collecting some grain for Bhau's beleagured army‡. Unfortunately for him the ageing Maratha Malakari was pitted against a cleverer and a far shrewder man. Actually, the Abdali's choice of the young, intrepid Atai Khan, the Durrani Wazir's nephew just fresh from Afghanistan with a much-needed re-inforcement, to face Govindpant, could not have been bettered. The Shah now charged him with this all-important task, to march to the Doab and stop the Maratha raids there. Atai Khan heading a contingent of 2,000 regulars and 10,000 "tabinan" and accompanied by Jarchi Karimdad Khan reached Shahdara, opposite Delhi, by a forced march covering nearly 100 miles in a day and night. Here they were joined by Najib-ud-daulah's *amils* who knew the country well. Early next morning the Durranis swooped down, "like lightning", on the men of Govindpant. The latter was taken completely off his guard, took to flight but was caught up and his head severed§. Later it was to be paraded through Abdali's camp

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**Kashi Raj*, 15.

†Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, 228. *Nur-ud-din*, 42-3. Najib averring to the activities of Govind Ballal is reported telling the Shah, "Majority of the *thanas* in the Doab are still under my control but those within ten or twelve *kos* of Shahjahanabad have gone out of my control."

‡Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 70.

We are told that this sum (six lakhs and twenty thousand) was not even a fourth of what Bhau had demanded from the beginning.

§*Kashi Raj*, 16.

For his performance, the Shah "extolled" Atai Khan and granted him "a robe of honour".

as a trophy of war and despatched to Bhau, "a triumphant proof of the downfall of his plan*".

That plan had indeed failed for the path to the coming of provisions in the Shah's camp "was re-opened" and grain supplies were more abundant†. It had failed in another way too for with Govindpant's death the Maratha line of communication with the world outside was seriously threatened. Actually, it was a rare letter of theirs which now, escaped interception by Abdali's men‡, besides they now began to experience "scarcity of all sorts of goods§." Again this back-breaking loss, coming as it did in the wake of Balwantrao's death barely a fortnight earlier must have sagged the army's morale to a very low ebb¶.

After Govindpant

It has been noticed earlier that, before his death, Govindpant had collected a sum of Rs. 4,20,000 and handed it over to Naro Shankar at Delhi for onward transmission to Bhau at Panipat‖. Part of this treasure, Rs. 1,10,000, did actually reach the Maratha camp without any mishap≠. The bulk of remainder was despatched a week or so later with 300 troopers, each carrying Rs. 500 tied round his waist. Six of the men returned at the end of the first day while the rest persevered ahead but fell, by mistake, into Abdali's camp. Their talk betrayed their Marathi tongue and, caught in a trap, the enemy annihilated the entire lot℔, depriving Bhau's bankrupt treasury of its much-needed source of income.

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*There is a slight difference of opinion as to the exact date when the encounter took place. Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 71 disputes the correctness of the usually accepted December 17 and believes it must have been three days later—December 20.

†*Kashi Raj*, 16.

‡Anand Rao Bhau Phalke (Ed.), *Sindeshahi Itihasachin Sadhane*, i (Gwalior 1929), 222 mentions a rare letter of Jankoji written only ten days prior to the battle and reaching its destination without being intercepted by Abdali's patrols.

§*Nur-ud-din*, 49.

¶*Kashi Raj*, 16 tells us that after Govindpant's death, Bhau felt very depressed because "from all sides nothing but news of defeat and flight reached his ears."

‖Supra, p. 200.

≠Bhau, it appears, had deputed Krishnarao Ballal of Manaji Paygude's contingent to fetch this treasure to his camp. The first consignment was brought by Krishnarao on December 21. Rajwade, *op.cit.*, i, 281 cited in Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 71.

℔According to *Kashi Raj*, 16, the Bhau had sent 2,000 troopers to Naro Shankar to bring the treasure and each man was bringing a bag of Rs. 2,000. This would

(*Continued on page 202*)

This incident which took place on January 6 has been partly explained away by the shift in Abdali's camp—his third and, as it proved, the last—on December 30, a fact of which the troopers could not be fully aware*. However that may be it was representative, as no doubt eloquent, of the superior might of Abdali in the weeks immediately preceding the battle.

Another outrage took place just about that time. A party of 20,000 Marathas, probably among the non-combatants, issued out from their camp one night to gather firewood and fodder in the neighbouring 'Dhak' woods. Shah Pasand Khan, with a body of 5,000 men who was on a night patrol, surrounded these unforunate people, and while the darkness of night prevented any help reaching them, killed the entire lot to a man, piling up the gruesome corpses one above the other. The incident engendered great fear among Bhau's men and none would dare move out of the camp. In fact, "the grief and terror which this event struck into the Marathas is not to be described; and even the Bhau himself began to give way to fear and despondence†."

Alongwith Govindpant, Bahu's chief lieutenant in bringing rack and ruin to the territories of Abdali's allies, another effort in the same direction was made through two other Maratha leaders in the upper Doab—Gopal Ganesh Barve and Krishnanand.

(*Continued from page 201*)

yield a figure of Rs. 40,00,000. This chronicler further tells us that "By divine dispensation such occurrences happened daily". *Ibid*, 17.

Nur-ud-din, 44, gives the number of troopers as 500 and tells us that "when it was yet dark the brigade of Jarchi Karimdad Khan and Mir Atai Khan encountered and frightened them by opening musket fire on them. Drawing their swords they killed all of them except one or two who saved their lives by flight to the city."

According to *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 132 Pasajipant Bagh and 300 riders later reached the "(Maratha) camp by various routes."

*Abdali had shifted his camp site on December 30, while the troopers who left Delhi on January 2, were unaware of the change. Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 71-2.

†Kashi Raj in H. G. Rawlinson, *op.cit.*, 27. Evidently this was an occasion for a lot of gloating over in the Abdali camp for the chronicler tells us that "when the affair was reported to the Shah, he went out with most of his chiefs to the scene of the slaughter, where dead bodies were piled up into a perfect mountain....".

Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 73 contends that a fire "either purposely or by random cannon shot" had destroyed the big haystacks heaped in the Maratha camp. "This misfortune turned the situation from bad to worse" and it was a result of this mishap that the Marathas went out for pasture that night.

Actually, they started on their campaign to raid Avadh alongwith Govindpant. This, however, did not yield any results—in any case its timing, towards the first week of January, made it impossible to effect in one way or another, the main issue at Panipat. For Shuja had made adequate arrangements in his territories for proper defence nor did these diversionary tactics particularly succeed in engaging his serious attention.*

It is to this period, the last fortnight or so preceding the battle, that we must ascribe the strict patrolling undertaken by the Shah personally as well as by his commanders. We are told, by an eye-witness, that the Abdali, accompanied by a small escort of "only 40 or 50 horsemen", and his son Timur Shah took a round not only of his own and his allies' camps but even that of his adversaries though, and probably inevitably, "from a distance". This daily routine is said to have covered a distance of 120 kilometres and was finished about noon†.

Whether this exercise by the Shah would have been possible during November, when the Maratha cannonading had forced the Afghans shift the site of their camp, appears problematic‡. What is certain is that, after the third week of December, the Afghan night patrols under such redoubtable captains as Shah Pasand Khan were intensified. We are told that every night 5,000 horsemen were appointed to stand ready and armed, 2 kilometres in front of the Durrani camp, apparently to keep vigil against any surprise move by the enemy. Again, for purposes of patrolling round the camp another force was set apart and "in this way was watch kept every day§".

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*Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 76-8 contends that before Gopalrao crossed into the Mirzapur district and returned to his seat in Korah-Jahanabad, in the Doab, after a short encounter with Veni Bahadur's troops, they had carried fire and sword for more than a hundred miles along the north bank of the Ganga.

Sarkar, *op.cit.*, ii, 229-30 maintains that this second plan of "raid and diversion.....also miscarried."

The conflict with regard to dates, the 1st Edition, ii, 313 erroneously mentioned that the campaign took place at the beginning of December, has been corrected in 2nd, *Loc. cit.*

†*Kashiraj*, 17.

‡Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 67 maintains that Kashi Raj was perhaps remembering this last lapse of two weeks when he wrote 19 years later and "made it applicable to the whole period of two and a half months."

§*Kashi Raj*, 17.

What with this day and night patrolling and the long series of mishap that preceded it, the Maratha camp must have been a beleaguered township after the third week in December. The southward road to Delhi had been cut off, for Abdali now lay astride it. In Bhau's rear, Kunjpura had been taken by Daler Khan. Only from the north-west would provisions sometimes reach the Marathas from the not-too-ill-disposed founder of Patiala, Alha Singh Jat. But this source was soon cut off too*. The Marathas had indeed been reduced to sore straits.

Peace Parleys

Against this background a serious effort for peace was made by Bhau, although desultory negotiations had gone on interminably and all through this period. If Kashi Raj is to be believed, Bhau maintained one Ganesh Pandit as a news-reporter, on his behalf, in Shuja-ud-daulah's camp. And through the intermediacy of Kashi Raj himself communicated with the Nawab of Avadh: "Through the connection thus established, the Bhau used often to write letters in his own hand and send them to me by this valet". The Maratha leader had also expressed his willingness to accept "whatever Shuja-ud-daulah may desire". And as earnest of his sincerity of purpose had sent an imprint of his palm, dipped in saffron, "with oaths and agreement" and even a white Deccani head-dress with a scarf ('sarpech') for the purpose of an exchange of turbans†.

The Durani Wazir Shah Vali Khan, it appears, was inclined to accept the Maratha offer and Hafiz Rahmat Khan, the Rohilla Sardar, was also well-disposed. There was, however, one implacable enemy of peace—and of the Marathas—who had to be reckoned with‡. Najib-ud-daulah, it appears, won over Jahan Khan and the influential Qazi Idris to his side—and they now remonstrated with the Shah against the acceptance of any terms of peace. Najib was convinced, it appears, that with "the whole of the Deccan assembled here" opportunities such as these may not recur, and that by one single exertion now they could "sweep away this thorn of Hindustan from our midst." Should his counsels, however, not

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**Khazanah-e-Amirah*, *op.cit.*, 107.

†*Kashi Raj*, 19.

‡*Kashi Raj*, 20, tells us that "in short, all the sardars.....in one breath agreed to make peace".

be heeded, he later warned the Shah, he as a soldier "can form a compromise with this tribe also*".

The Shah, too, for a while was inclined towards a peaceful settlement:

> "The country that I had rescued from the Marathas, I have entrusted to the Afghans. They themselves are happy but my troops are dissatisfied .....The safety of my Empire does not depend upon the chastisement of the Marathas†".

The Qazi, however, was more persuasive. He invoked the Prophet's name. "Do not fear the enemy", he is reported to have said, "do not fear the lack of funds and fear God alone". The Durrani Sardars followed suit. "The Qazi is right", they cried in unison and protested their steadfast loyalty in the prosecution of 'Jihad', "whether we are well-fed or are starving." The Shah bowed to the popular clamour, asked them to read the 'Fatiha' and thus it was that "the talk of peace forthwith ended and the agents of the Marathas were dismissed‡."

The Decision to Fight

While the war-drums were beating ever louder in the Durrani's camp where, at the instance of Najib-ud-daulah, the Shah had now set his face firmly against peace, the Maratha position was worsening with every passing day. It has already been noticed that, by the third week of December, they had been cut off from contact with the world outside, in consequence their food supply had dwindled to a mere trickle. And food, no less than fodder, was important for that enormous host which comprised the Maratha camp.

Among the friends of the Marathas there was Surajmal, the Jat Raja. He was well-disposed but could not be of any material help so far as the supply of grain or even monetary assistance was

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**Kashi Raj*, 20-21.

Sahibzada Abdur Rashid in his Foreword, p. x, to Sheikh Abdur Rashid's translation of *Nur-ud-din*, has maintained that Najib turned his face against peace with the Marathas "because he was convinced that the Marathas did not intend to keep the peace."

†*Nur-ud-din*, 48.

‡*Nur-ud-din*, 47-8.

concerned, Abdali's strict watch had ensured that.* Again Alha Singh Jat was friendly but the route was difficult, if not indeed hazardous. Besides, he is said to have demanded hard cash for his supplies—and the Maratha treasury was virtually empty†. It has already been noticed that this route had been cut off too because of an expedition which the Abdali had sent into the Jat Raja's territory. In January even the very punctilious Gardis, who had received regular salaries hitherto, had to do without—so difficult had the money situation become‡.

Reduced to such a perilous plight, the Bhau had thrown peace feelers. Negotiations had dawdled along with the not-ill-disposed Shuja as the intermediary, and the Wazir an understanding and accommodating supporter. Nor was the Shah, left entirely to himself, unwilling to reach an amicable settlement. Nearer home there were quite some problems that needed his immediate attention, nor

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*There has been some controversy over Bhau's behaviour towards Surajmal at Delhi which antagonised the Jat ruler and made him leave the Maratha camp. Sarkar, *op.cit.*, 183, maintains that Bhau failed to give adequate assurances to Surajmal and allay his suspicions, that he "insulted and alarmed the Jat king beyond hope of appeasement."

Bhau Saheb Bakhar, 117, reports Bhau telling Surajmal, "We hav e not left the Deccan on your strength. We shall do what we want to do. If you want to remain here, remain, or go back home. After defeating the Gilzai (the enemy) we will settle with you."

Professor Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 48-9, maintains that Bhau had no intention of insulting Surajmal, nor had he withheld the requisite assurances. He believes that Surajmal was a thoroughly selfish man and left the Maratha camp ostensibly on account of difference in outlook on matters of policy, but really to save himself from Bhau's demands and importunities. Again, throughout the Panipat campaign the Bhau was not even once suspicious of the Jat Raja's attitude towards the Marathas. And Surajmal, on his own, did not do anything antagonistic to their interests, "but on the other hand considerably helped them by allowing provision and money to pass through his territory unmolested." At the beginning of October there was even talk of Surajmal's son, Jawahirmal joining the Bahu at Panipat with Jat forces, and after Prince Jawan Bakhat was proclaimed Wali Ahid for the absentee Emperor (and his father) Shah Alam II, on October 10—the Jat Raja was fully reconciled to the Maratha side. His humane behaviour and the monetary help he afforded to the Maratha fugitives after Panipat would further buttress the above thesis.

†Sarkar, *op.cit.*, 225-6.

‡This was due to the fact that the treasure of Rupees 1,50,000 sent by Naro Shankar from Delhi had fallen into Abdali's hands.

were his own soldiers free from privations*. Besides, a seasoned general that he was, peace would always be welcome to war. But the bed-rock on which peace foundered time and over again—was the cantankerous, vindictive and irreconcilable Najib who would rally to his side the fanaticism and bigotry of the Qazis and the parochialism of the ignorant Afghan soldiery. Nonetheless Bhau's repeated pleas for peace bespoke eloquently of the sad state to which he and his men had been reduced. The fact that, interminable discussions continued, that Abdali entertained such requests from time to time proves conclusively that he too was not very advantageously situated—that he wanted to get out of it all by some stratagem that may be contrived, short of war.

By January 13, the Maratha camp was in a bad way, neither food, nor fodder was to be had. Men and animals alike suffered the worst privations—there could be no better tribute to the efficacy of Abdali's blockade—and were probably dying like flies. The sack of Panipat, a few days earlier yielded—could yield—nothing. The town had been bled white previously too and could offer no succour. The scene has been vividly protrayed by a contemporary writer who talked of the filth and stench, apart from famine†.

The officers and men alike then determined to call the attention of the Bhau to their sad plight. They had been starving now for two

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. *It may be recalled here that in October 1760, at Qandhar, Haji Jamal Khan of the Zargarani tribe had proclaimed himself ruler of Afghanistan, that early next year the Shah's own nephew, Abdul Khaliq Khan, had raised the standard of revolt at Girishk—and that Qandhar fell into his hands.

As for his own soldier's sad plight we have the evidence of *Nur-ud-din*, 47-8. The Shah had told his assembled Sardars that his troops were "dissatisfied". They had undergone some privations even at Panipat, in November. And hardly within a fortnight of their great victory against the Marathas at Panipat, the Afghan soldiery had mutinied claiming arrears of two years' salary. Kashi Raj, *op.cit.*, 41-2 uses the word 'balva' for this rising of the Durranis.

. †*Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 107. The writer underlines the fact that the Maraths died, in their camp for want of food.

Tarikh-i-Husain Shahi, 68 talking of the famine of food and fodder relates that horses in the camp were reduced to mere skeletons or bones.

Sarkar, *op.cit.*, 233 describes the scene graphically, "There was no food and no firewood for man and no grain for the horses. The stench of carcases of men and beasts lying uncremated and unburied , and the effluvia of the evacuations of four lakhs of living creatures, made the confines of the entrenchment a living hell for human beings".

days. Nothing was available to eat,"Whence can we procure, no matter at what price", they cried in agony, an article that had totally disappeared? And if they were to perish "in this disgraceful manner", why not face up to the arbitrament of the sword? "And then what fate has ordained will happen*".

The decision to offer battle on the morrow was not spontaneous —nor does it seem to have been unanimous. It appears that some of the generals, including Malharrao Holkar, wanted to postpone the crucial battle by another four days.† Would that not indicate that the situation was not quite as desperate as has been painted‡. Holkar was no mean general, nor could he have been unaware, nor yet oblivious, of the plight of his famished solidery. What he sought to gain by a further wait may be seriously questioned—but not the fact that he advocated it. We know that the discussions were long-drawn-out and the final decision not arrived at until midnight. This would lend support to the view that the Maratha counsels, right at the top rung of their leadership, were sharply divided§.

A slight difficulty has been raised by an emissary of Bhau who, after the Maratha leaders' discussions, allegedly repaired to Shuja's camp opposite to make a last desperate bid for saving peace. It is said that this envoy, Bhau's own betel-bearer Balak Ram, carried to Kashi Raj a message, written in his master's own hand,

> "The water has now risen above the level of head. If anything is possible, do it now, or else give me a frank refusal, as no time remains for writing and discussion¶".

Surely, what was it that was sought to be achieved? If it was peace, Bhau should have waited for "anything.....possible",

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**Kashi Raj*, 21. Also see *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 140.

†Apart from Holkar, Jankoji too is said to have lent his support to the proposal for a postponement of the hostilities. "The idea (of coming out of the camp and fighting) does not seem right", they told the Bhau. *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 141.

‡A letter of Jankoji, written only ten days prior to the battle and reaching its destination, without mishap, did not betray any sign of fear or helplessness. The writer was confident that the affairs of his revenue collector (who was having his troubles with the Rajput princes) would straighten out once Abdali had been beaten. For details see *Supra*, p. 20.

§"The divergence in the military counsels of the Maratha chiefs was.....a national misfortune.....ultimately the clamour of the starved decided the day of the battle and not the convenience or forethought of the commander. This was a calamity, but perhaps there was no help for it". Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 74-6.

¶*Kashi Raj*, 21.

being done "now". But there was no wait—for hardly had Bhau's message reached its destination, when the Maratha army began moving. If Bhau, like a good general, wanted to keep his enemy guessing, his message, followed close on its heels by an instantaneous movement of his troops, in formation, on the battlefield, would appear to defeat that purpose. It would thus actually appear to serve as the harbinger or herald of what, in fact, followed—and was too obvious to escape notice anyway. The story of the last message thus, however well it may read, does not square up with the actual situation that existed. It is dramatic and builds up to an excellent finale but does not answer to a sensible rationale*.

*Professor Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 129 has put orth the view that, in actual fact, Bhau's betel-bearer was one Balaram Vaghoji Naik, and not Balak Ram, which, he contends, is not a common Marathi name. Again, he has pointed out that Balaram and some others had gone to Shuja's camp on Sunday, preceding the battle on Wednesday. The message, if any, must have been delivered then.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ARRANGEMENTS OF THE TWO ARMIES: THEIR NUMBERS AND PLAN OF BATTLE

The Two Armies

On that fateful January 14,* the Marathas marched out of their beleaguered entrenchments and drew up in battle array. The movement of that vast horde, the clanging of the chains of their heavy guns, as they were brought into position, the clatter of the hoofs of horses, not to talk of clouds of dust raised by man and beast alike as they advanced, could not have remained long un-noticed. This apart, the eagle-eyed Shah Pasand Khan, on night patrol with his 5,000 troopers, and other spies hanging around had observed the Maratha movements. Nor did Abdali take long in putting his own men—and those of his Indian allies—in battle formation†. How many troops did the Marathas put into the field, how many

*Oskar Mann, "Quellenstudien Zur Goschichte des Ahmed Sah Durrani", in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. LII, (Leipzig, 1898) No. 1, pp. 97-118, No. 2, pp. 161-86, and No. 3, pp. 323-58, mentions a battle of Sonepat (not Panipat) in 1174 AH (1762 A.D.) on the basis of the Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi by Mahmud-ul-Musannai bin Ibrahim-al-Husaini.

H. R. Gupta, *Later Mughal History of the Panjab, op.cit.*, p. 184 mentions the date of the battle as January 13, 1761.

Contemporary accounts and Maratha chorniclers, however, are clear that it was a Wednesday and the date January 14, 1761.

†According to *Kashi Raj*, 22 Shuja had awakened the Shah from his sleep and informed him of what he had learnt from Balak Ram namely, that the Maratha forces were on the move. The Shah, after Kashi Raj himself had been summoned to his presence and the correctness of the facts verified, in the same sleeping dress, mounted his favourite horse, Choki, and ordered Shah Pasand and Shah Vali Khan to marshal the ranks. Riding 2 kilometres in front of them, he is said to have directed and supervised their formations.

Tarikh-i-Husain Shahi, *op.cit.*, 69 relates Shuja-ud-daulah, telling the Shah that that day the Marathas had come out of their entrenchments for offering battle and the Shah asking him if he had seen this with his own eyes.

Ahmad Shah? Above all, how were the two forces arranged, how fit were they, how ready to fight?

Two eye-witnesses of the battle scene have proferred diametrically divergent figures for the two camps. According to Kashi Raj, the Shah had inspected a muster of his troops a day after the Dusahra, *i.e.* October 20. The number then was 41,800 horse and 38,000 foot. Of these 24 'dastas' of 1,200 men each, or 28,800, were cavalry and approximately 10,000 infantry, composed of "tiger cubs of Kabul." These with 200 camel swivels, 40 pieces of artillery and "some shutar-nals" thrown in, belonged to the Shah. The rest were troops of his Indian allies—Shuja-ud-daulah had 2,000 cavalry, 2,000 infantry and 20 guns large and small:; Najib 6,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry with "plenty of war material"; the par-Rohillas, under Hafiz Rahmat and Dunde Khan, 15,000 foot and 3,000-4,000 horse, "with a few guns" and Ahmad Khan Bangash 2,000 horse and foot and a few pieces of artillery*."

Allowing for the casualties and wastage due to privations, the fording of the Jamuna, with its marshy banks, and the initial shortage of supplies, a deduction of about 30 per cent from the above total may not be too wide off the mark. The number had, however, swollen when, early in December, the Shah had received very welcome reinforcements from home under Haji Atai Khan. These may be estimated at 2,000 regulars and 6,000 irregulars. The Indian allies too had thinned out—Najib brought 15,000 in the field, as against 23,000 he had presented at the muster in October; Shuja 3,000 as against 4,000. The Abdali army in the field, thus may be roughly computed at 60,000 men†.

Muhammad Ja'far Shamlu who was present at Panipat, in the camp of Shah Pasand Khan has, in consonance with the general tenor of his account, given highly inflated figures. It is a pity that any serious student of history should tend to accept either one or the other‡. According to Shamlu, Ahmad Shah had with him, on his

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*Kashi Raj has put the total strength of the Afghan army at 40,000 horse and 40,000 foot but when his figures are actually worked out they yield 41,800 horse and 38,000 foot, *Ibid*, 12.

†The writer has, for most part, accepted the analysis worked out by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, *op.cit.*, 203-7.

‡After conceding that the difference between the figures given by Kashi Raj and Shamlu "is staggering", Dr. S. Moinul Haq, "*A Hisotry of the Freedom Movement, being the story of Muslim Struggle for the Freedom of Hind-Pakistan*", Vol. i, 1707-1947,

(*Continued on page 211*)

own, at the time of his fording the river 60,000 cavalry, 20,000 infantry, 2,000 camel swivels and 200 pieces of cannon. If the troops of his Indian allies were to be added up they would stand thus: Shuja-ud-daulah, 30,000 horse and foot with 50 pieces of artillery, Ahmad Khan Bangash 15,000 horse and foot with 60 guns, Najib Khan 30,000 horse and foot and 30 guns, Hafiz Rahmat Khan Rohilla 25,000 horse and 25 guns, Dunde Khan 12,000 horse and foot with 10 guns and Sadullah Khan, "with a similar force*"—yielding a grand total of 1,14,000 horse and foot and 185 guns. Since he had placed the Durranis at such an inflated number, probably need arose to multiply the figures on the Maratha side too. Thus, we have for them a grand total of 3,50,000—a figure which excluded Ibrahim Khan's 30,000 troops†.

According to Kashi Raj, Bhau's muster at Kunjpura on October 19, showed 45,000 horse and 15,000 foot—the latter including 9,000 well-drilled Gardi sepoys. Allowing for Maratha casualties —and these must have been far heavier than on the Durrani side, their total could not have exceeded 45,000 on the battlefield. Numerically thus the Maratha force was inferior to the Durrani‡.

In computing these figures care should be taken—and Kashi Raj is to be commended for this—to draw a clear line of distinction between the regular troops and the non-combtants, or camp followers, who swelled the ranks on the two sides. It is not improbable that Shamlu, in his figures, does not observe this distinction. On an average, there may have been four non-combatants to every regular soldier—and thus probably each camp had about $2\frac{1}{2}$ lakh people in it.

How effective were these non-combatants when it came to fighting may, at best, be a debatable point. Two facts, however,

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(Continued from page 211)
(Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1957), pp. 288-9, concludes that "there can be no doubt that the Maratha hosts were numerically far superior even if they were not actually more than three and a half lakhs as has been stated by some quite reliable authorities."

*Muhammad Ja'far Shamlu, *op.cit.*, 148-9.

†*Ibid*, 147.

‡"Sarkar has taken great pains to show that the fighting strength of the Marathas was numerically inferior to the Muslims. The evidence, to the contrary, however, is so over-whelming that his conclusions cannot be accepted. Of the two witness authorities he relies on Kashi Raj and discards Shamlu without adequate reasons". Dr. S. Moinul Haq, "History of the Freedom Movement", *op.cit.*, 289, foot-note 1.

may be conceded. Firstly, the Marathas were encumbered by large numbers which had been attracted by the thought of pilgrimage to holy places up in the north, in the comparative safety and protection afforded by an armed camp—old and infirm people, women*. Nor was the equipment of such irregulars as the 'Pendharis', of a nature that could inspire confidence in their fighting ability. Actually, they were not supposed to be fighting at all, but were meant, as has been noticed earlier, exclusively for plundering pruposes†. In contrast , their counterparts in Abdali's camp were much better-equipped and almost as good as the regulars‡. Their contribution, therefore, to the battle was far greater—for they were a source of strength not weakness; an asset, not a liability.

The Maratha Plan

What was the Maratha plan of battle at Panipat. How did they propose to fight it out, what did they seek to gain? That there was a serious difference of opinion among the top Maratha leaders as to the tactics they were to employ on the field has been conceded on all hands. Thus Malharrao Holkar and Surajmal Jat, as probably a host of others, wanted to employ the traditional Maratha mode of warfare, the 'Ganimi Kava'. Better known as the guerilla or 'hit and run' tactics§, the Martha leaders were quite at home in this and, not unnaturally, did not want to make any serious departure from it¶.

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*"I remained there (at Toka, on the Godavery) for sometime, till at length Bhao Sahib, marched with an army into Hindustan. I accompanied him, taking with me my mother and my wife, for the purpose principally of making pilgrimages to the holy cities of Benares, Prayaga and Gaya, and of becoming purified in the waters of the Ganges." Nana Farnavis, *op.cit.*, 166. His case was probably typical of many more.

†"Fighting is not their object, they have seldom been known to resist the attack even of an inferior army.....", Moor, "*Origin of the Pindharies preceded by Hitorical Notices on the Rise of the Different Maratha States*", p. 149, quoted in S. N. Sen, *op.cit.*, p. 76. Also see Supra, p. 183–4.

‡"An average Afghan camp follower would be a good horse-rider even when he had no horse of his own. Similarly he would be more adept in using arms than possibly an average camp follower in the Maratha army", Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 83.

§Muslim historians scornfully called the Maratha mode of fighting 'mode of the robbers or brigands", *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 102.

¶"I was a mere boy; and His Highness (Sadashivrao Bhau) though sufficiently wise on all other occasions, seems on this to have lost his usual wisdom. My maternal uncle, Balvantrao (Balvantrao Krishna Mehnedale's sister was Nana

(*Continued on page 214*)

The essential point herein was to harass the enemy and avoid pitched battles. Actually, the Maratha horseman was dependent less upon his arms, and more upon his speed, left the hostile army alone as long the he could, although he harried it constantly. A major part, of course, was played by ravaging the country in which the enemy was encamped.

The revolt was led by Ibrahim Khan Gardi, strongly supported and backed by Sadashivrao Bhau. What they advocated was the use of the well-drilled, trained infantry in straight action. The infantry, equipped with muskets and matchlocks, and backed by heavy artillery, was wedded to the hollow square formation. For its most effective use it needed the strong backing of a quick-moving, light cavalry which would occupy the ground cleared by artillery action. Hence what was imperative was a judicious and well-integrated synthesis of the two—*i.e.* of the trained foot-musketeers with the light, fast-moving cavalry. The tactics had succeeded remarkably well in the battle fought against the Nizam, at Udgir. Sadashivrao had won his laurels there and had since become a staunch advocate of the employment of Gardis.*

Whether in that welter of strongly-divided counsels and staunchly-held opinions, hotly debated† late that evening while half-starved men surrounded the generals and clamoured for action on the morrow, a firm decision was actually taken to adopt the hollow-square formation has been disputed. Thus it is contended

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(*Continued from page 213*)

Farnavis' mother) and Nana Purandare, His Highness's natural advisers, were set aside, and Bhawani Shankar and Shah Nawaz Khan became favourite counsellors; in consequence of which he abadoned our system of warfare, and adopted that of the enemy". Nana Farnavis, *op.cit.*, 168.

*The battle of Udgir was fought on February 2-3, 1760. Actually the Nizam had planned to reach the fort of Dharur and make a stand there, but while 24 kilometres this side of it, the Marathas held up his march, surrounded him from all sides and completely routed his rear, under Shaukat Jang. By the treaty that followed, the Nizam had to cede nearly half his dominions and agree to the Marathas controlling his foreign relations. For details a reference may be made to P. Setu Madhava Rao, "*Maratha-Nizam Relations*," *Journal of the University of Bombay*, xxviii, Part 4 (January 1958), pp. 1-25.

†Earlier during a heated discussion with Malharrao Holkar, Ibrahim Khan Gardi is reported to have threatened to throw him in front of his musketeers and open his battery should he (Malhar) veer away from the entrenched battle plan which he (Ibrahim Gardi) advocated and Malhar opposed. S.N. Sen, *op.cit.*, 114.

that what was, in fact, decided upon was to offer battle on the entire front and that no specific plans as such were drawn up*. This view is supported by the actual conduct of the battle—for no sooner did it begin, than it became clear that no plan was being followed, no details were stuck to, no over-all direction or control was apparent. In short, the plan, if indeed it was there, was conspicuous by its absence.

Apologists for a detailed plan contend that one such was actually drawn up and was stuck to in the opening stages of the battle, at any rate. Bhau's main objective, it seems, was to effect a break-through in the ranks of Abdali's forces, march past the right-hand corner of his camp, carry his entire army and baggage to the enemy's rear and thus placed, with the river at his back, fight out an action. It would be apparent at once that the decisive battle was thus to be fought not on the morrow—as actually did happen—but on subsequent days. This plan would have the distinct advantage of saving the entire camp, which would always be in the rear, and permit its escape to Delhi, or other places in the Doab. Besides, should the plan succeed, the Afghans would have to fight on their flanks and thus expose their camp to enemy ravages. Contemporary accounts mention the fact that during the generals' confabulations at night it was resolved that the army should form a hollow square, with the women and the camp in the centre, and with the help of the artillery try to cut its way through hostile ranks†. But since most of the commanders in the field either did not understand it too well or had probably no heart in it they did not observe it, in actual fact‡. Hence the appearance of a total lack of planning, or of orderly action.

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*"Of the Bhau's plan of battle we have no record .....He had, it appears, formed no plan except a general engagement along the entire front", Sarkar, *op.cit.*, 240.

†According to *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 141-3 Ibrahim Khan Gardi's plan of a hollow square, with each side held by one of the chief sardars and the followers and non-combatants in the middle was finally accepted. For, "all were convinced of the suggestion" and "after this decision money was distributed among the soldiers for expenses next day".

‡We are told that actually the Maratha army deployed in the field "just as people stand in line to salaam a person"and this made Ibrahim Khan wonder: "at night what did Bahu decide and what is he doing now in practice ". *Ibid*, 144.

"The divergence in the military counsels of the Maratha chiefs was the basic cause of the opposite manner of atcing on the field of battle".

Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 74-5.

Again, on a closer analysis, it would seem that the execution of the reported plan was well-nigh impossible. Bhau was tied down to the town of Panipat—for not only the women and the camp followers may not have been very easy to carry, but most difficult of all would have been the heavy cannon secured to the ground by chains. Again,with the loss of Kunjpura to Daler Khan, Naro Shankar at Delhi did not command a secure enough base to which the men could have retired. Hence it would appear that situated as he was, a mere break-through would have been impossible—Abdali would have seen to that. It would have been fruitless too for, in fact, the Maratha army's liberation could only come through a decisive defeat and flight of Ahmad Shah. There was no other way out and in any case, however laudable his (Bhau's) objective, it was not capable of realisation.

Deployment of Forces

In arranging his troops Bhau had taken good care to isolate the not-very-popular Ibrahim Khan Gardi*. Thus he was placed at the extreme left wing of the army in command of his nine battalions—approximately 8,000 men—of foot-musketeers. As he stood on the battlefield in the village of Nimbdi, to the south-west of Panipat, the heavy Maratha cannon was placed in front and his infantry, in deep columns, behind so that the artillery formed the spearhead of the march. To support him stood, at his back, such Maratha stalwarts as Damaji Gaikwar and Vithal Shivdeo with their light cavalry horse. Next came some minor captains and together they comprised the left wing.

In the Maratha Centre stood Sadashivrao Bhau and Vishwasrao the Peshwa's son with their personal troops—the Huzurat, 2 kilometres to the north of the village of Ugrakhedi. The Right was formed by Antaji Mankeshwar, Pilaji Jadav's son, Satvoji,Yashwantrao Pawar and Shamsher Bahadur with the Sindhia and Holkar contingents at the extreme end. The latter position was 2 kilometres to the south of the town of Panipat. The lighter artillery was placed chiefly in front of the right wing, though there were pieces on the

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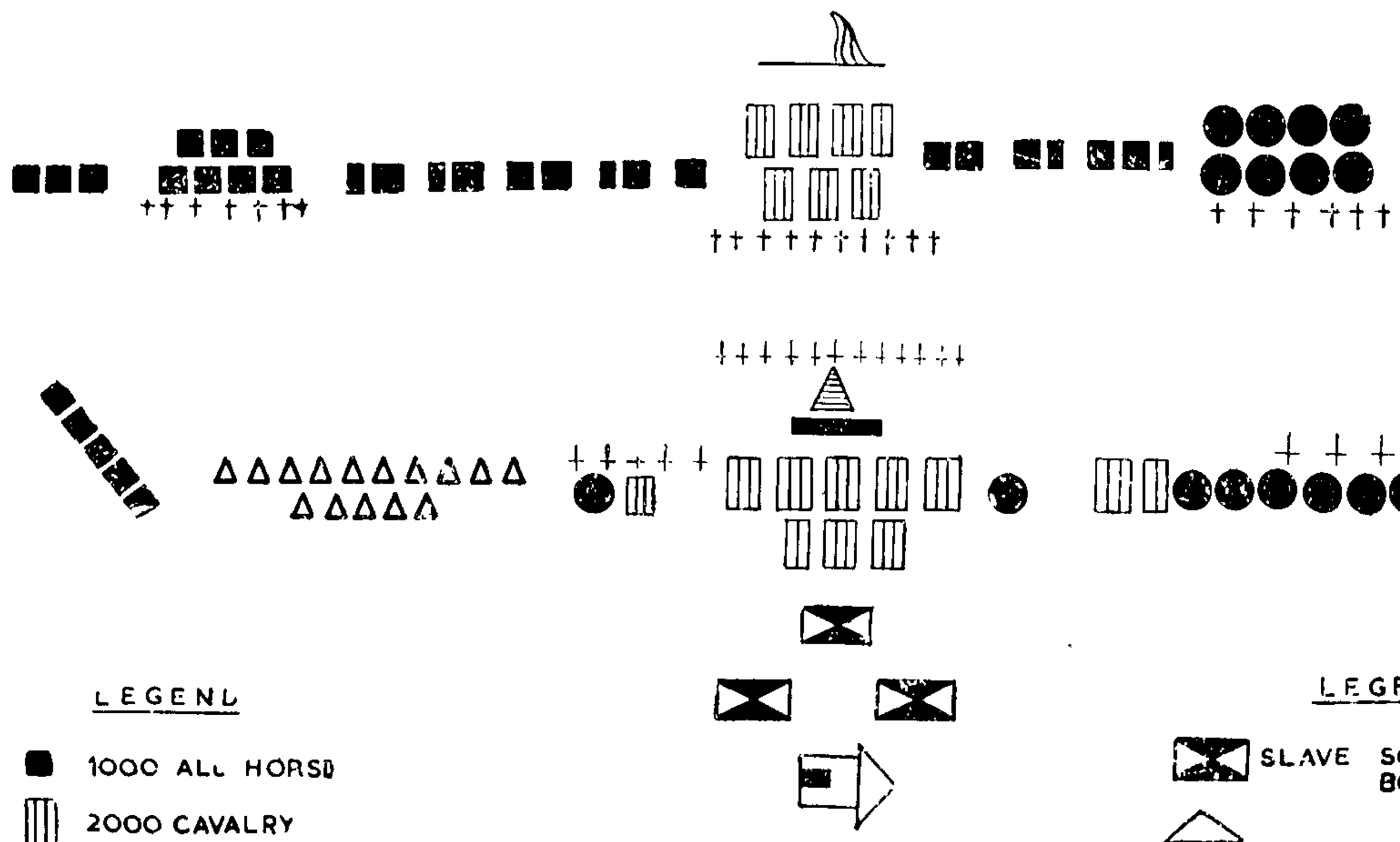
*"Ibrahim Khan was personally loyal, faithful and expert, but all along he remained unassimilated in the Maratha mode of warfare. The various Maratha officers never felt any comradeship with him and treated him as a foreigner", Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 118.

THE MARATHA – DURRANI FORMATIONS AT PANIPAT



LEGEND

- 1000 ALL HORSE
- 2000 CAVALRY
- 1000 FOOT MUSKETEERS
- 1000 ALL FOOT & DISMOUNTED CAVALRY
- 1000 SWIVELS
- 1000 KABULI INFANTRY PERSIAN HORSE

LEGEND

- SLAVE SQUADRONS OF BODY GUARDS (1000)
- ABDALI'S TENT
- BHAU'S BANNER
- ARTILLERY

S. P. SARDESAI

left as well as at the Centre*.

The detailed breakdown of Maratha forces was something like the following:

Left Wing:	Ibrahim Khan Gardi:	8,000	all foot-musketeers
	Damaji Gaikwar:	2,500	all horse
	Vithal Shivdeo:	1,500	horse
	Some petty captains:	2,000	horse
Centre:	Sadashivrao Bhau and Vishwasrao	13,500	cavalry troops
Right Wing:	Antaji Mankeshwar	1,000	all horse
	Satvoji Jadav	1,500	
	Minor captains	2,000	
	Yashwantrao Pawar	1,500	
	Shamsher Bahadur	1,500	
	Jankoji Sindhia	7,000	
	Malharrao Holkar	3,000	

Ahmad Shah Abdali had worked out his plan carefully for, in his camp too, there were such diverse, and mutually irreconcilable, elements as Najib-ud-dualah whose presence, and influence over the Shah, was bitterly resented by Hafiz Rahmat Khan, although both belonged to the same larger fratenity of the Indian Rohillas†. There was an additional risk which the Shah wanted to guard against—the possible defection, in the event of an adverse fortune in battle, of his Indian allies. He had, therefore, wedged in his own troops between the forces of his local (Indian) supporters. Again, as a consummate master of the art of war, he had not thrown in, at the very start, his entire man-power, nor had he placed himself in the front. Actually, he had stationed himself, behind the fighting lines, with a sizeable retinue of his choicest troops to supervise, direct and control—and throughout that day he kept a close, even an

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**Kashi Raj*, 22.

According to *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 143-4, on the Maratha left, next to Gardi were Damaji Gaikwar, Yashwantrao Pawar, Antaji Mankeshwar, Vithal Shivdeo and Shamsher Bhadur; the Right being formed by the Sindhia and Holkar contingents.

†*Nur-ud-din*, 46, tells us that Hafiz Rahmat resented the act that Najib, who had been a poor man among the Afghans,"has risen to the position of Amir-ul-umara and had superseded the other sardars" and since he had been able to persuade Shuja to join Abdali's camp "his (Najib's) position and prestige had greatly increased."

hourly, watch on the shifting fortunes of the battle and influenced it, as we will notice presently, in a material way.

On his Right wing (which faced the Maratha Left under Ibrahim Khan Gardi) the Shah placed Barkhurdar Khan and Amir Beg with his superb Persian horse. Next came Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Dunde Khan followed by Ahmad Khan Bangash. Together they comprised the Durrani Right Wing, which stretched from Chhajpur Khurd, where Barkhurdar Khan stood, to Ujah where Ahmad Khan Bangash was stationed.

The Abdali Centre (facing Bhau and Vishwasrao) stood between Risalu and Ujah and comprised the Wazir, Shah Vali Khan, commanding 15,000 troops, supported by 2,000 camel swivels and 1,000 Kabuli infantry.

The Afghan Left Wing (facing the Maratha Right) stood on the plain between Risalu and Siwah. At its extreme end was Shah Pasand Khan with 5,000 Persian horse. Next came Najib-ud-daulah with his 15,000 foot and dismounted cavalry, followed by Shuja, one-third of whose men were foot-musketeers*.

From the west of Siwah, where Shah Pasand Khan stood, to Chhajpur Khurd, where Barkhurdar and Amir Beg were placed, the Afghan line of battle spanned a distance of 11 kilometres in a bent, curved line. The Marathas covered nearly half that much 5 kilometres from Nimbdi, where Ibrahim Khan Gardi was stationed to 1½ kilometres direct south of Panipat where Malharrao Holkar stood—almost in a straight line.

The break-down of Ahmad Shah Abdali's forces is worked out approximately thus:

Left Wing:	Shah Pasand Khan :	5,000 all horse
	Najib-ud-daulah :	15,000 all foot and dismounted cavalry

*. It would appear that the deployment of the Shah's forces on the battle field approximated closely to the arrangement of the different units in his camp at Panipat. Thus "the Shah's camp adjoined on its left hand the camp of Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah Bahadur, on the left of the Nawab was the camp of Najib-ud-Daulah Bahadur, on the right hand of the Shah's tents was the halting place of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Dunde Khan and Ahmad Khan of Farrukhabad". *Kashi Raj*, 15.

To get the actual deployment on the field all one need to do is to substitute the Shah's camp by the Wazir's and place Barkhurdar Khan and Amir Beg to the right extreme, on the one hand, and Shah Pasand to the left end, at the other.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BATTLE

The Initial Round, Maratha Edge

Having observed, at close quarters, the detailed break-down of the rival forces and the deployment of the various units on the field of battle, the stage is now set for a description of the actual fighting. The battle, that short, wintry day in January, which lasted 6 —7 hours, from about 9 in the morning to about 3.30 in the afternoon, passed through three distinct phases. There was the first round which went on until about 12 at noon and in which the Maratha forces had a clear edge. In the second, while the Marathas appear to have lost their initial advantage, there was a close, hard-fought combat. Thanks to the reinforcements thrown in, the Abdali seemed to be gaining the upper hand—and the Maratha fortunes were visibly declining. After 2 or 2–30 in the afternoon, in the final stages of the encounter, however, the result was plain as a pikestaff and all that remained to be determined was how many of the men and their leaders could escape the certain but inexorable calamity which threatened to engulf everyone.

As usual in those days, the battle began with a salvo of cannon fire. No sooner was it over, than the heavy Maratha guns began a round of cannonade which was designed to claim a large number of casualties in the enemy camp and clear a passage, for the advance of Ibrahim Gardi's musketeers, followed by the rest of the Maratha army, in battle formation. Unfortunately for those heavy Maratha guns, they were clumsy, their bores far from being round and perfect, and, failing to be depressed, could not claim a good, direct aim*. Their fire-power, therefore, went astray. Actually, their balls fell

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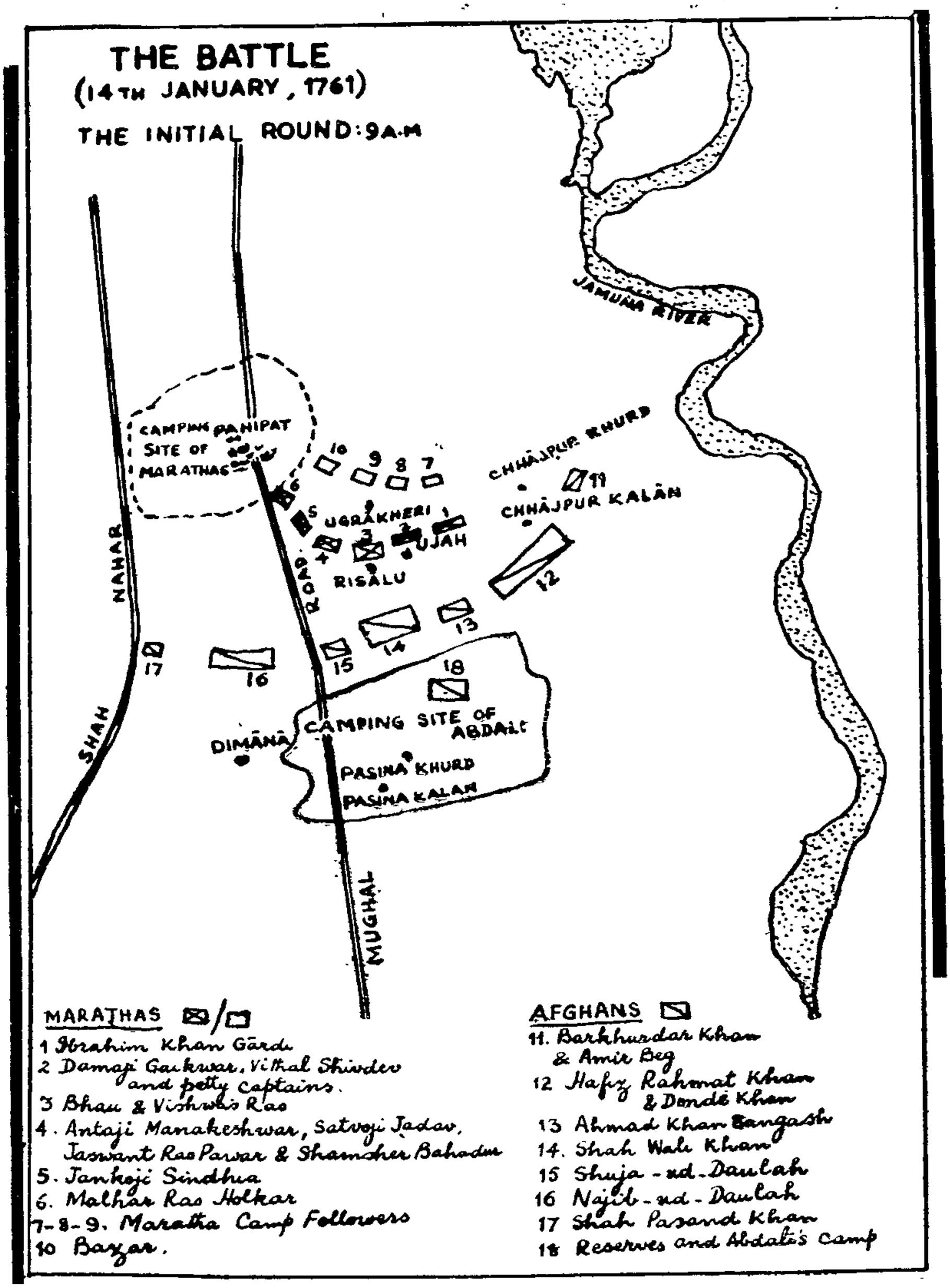
*The Maratha guns were larger and owing to "reckless aiming and faulty elevation" could not have much effectiveness. Meanwhile "from our side guns were seldom fired", the Durrani letting his enemies waste their powder in making unprofitable noise. *Kashi Raj* , 42.

Also see Sarkar, op. cit., 242.


THE BATTLE
(14TH JANUARY, 1761)
THE INITIAL ROUND: 9A.M
JAMUNA RIVER
CAMPING SITE OF PANIPAT MARATHAS
CHHAJPUR KHURD
CHHAJPUR KALAN
UGRAKHERI
UJAH
RISALU
ROAD
NAHAR
SHAH
DIMANA
CAMPING SITE OF ABDALI
PASINA KHURD
PASINA KALAN
MUGHAL
MARATHAS
1 Ibrahim Khan Gardi
2 Damaji Gaikwar, Vithal Shivdev and petty captains.
3 Bhau & Vishwas Rao
4. Antaji Manakeshwar, Satvoji Jadav, Jaswant Rao Pawar & Shamsher Bahadur
5. Jankoji Sindhia
6. Malhar Rao Holkar
7-8-9. Maratha Camp Followers
10 Bazar.
AFGHANS
11. Barkhurdar Khan & Amir Beg
12 Hafiz Rahmat Khan & Dondé Khan
13 Ahmad Khan Bangash
14. Shah Wali Khan
15 Shuja-ud-Daulah
16 Najib-ud-Daulah
17 Shah Pasand Khan
18 Reserves and Abdali's Camp

Shuja-ud-daulah	3,000 1/3 foot-musketeers
Centre: Shah Vali Khan	19,000 1,000 swivels
*Right Wing** :	
Barkhurdar Khan & Amir Beg	3,000 Kabuli infantry and Persian horse
Hafiz Rahmat Khan and Dunde Khan	14,000 1/4 or less cavalry
Ahmad Khan Bangash	1,000 foot

*For the breakdown of the two armies the writer has drawn on Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 208 and 238.

about 1½ kilometres behind the enemy lines—and failed to make the much-desired dent in the ranks opposite.

After this had gone on for about an hour, Ibrahim Khan seized the initative, stopped the cannonade, and asked his musketeers to advance into the ranks of the par-Rohillas under Hafiz Rahmat and Dunde Khan. To protect his rear and the sides–and to his front were the gunners, manning the heavy guns–Ibrahim had detached two of his battalions to keep a watch on the enemy troops of Barkhurdar Khan and Amir Beg covering his flanks on that side. The rest, seven of them, he now led personally into the battle and in a massed, drilled formation they slowly advanced step by step.

Soon enough as the infantry advanced, the heavy guns were left behind. Thus apart from the difficulty of moving them on an uneven ground —actually these had been dug in and chained together—there was the problem of preventing the enemy (Rohilla) cavalry in front and Barkhurdar's men on the sides cutting off the gunners. Ibrahim had, as we have noticed, anticipated this and provided for the contingency. He and his men, therefore, now fell on the Rohillas single-minded without diversion and "with the greatest impetuosity*".

As the Gardi-Rohilla duel progressed, the enemy ranks were considerably thinned, although their numbers were overwhelming for, with Ahmad Khan Bangash's 1,000 thrown in, the Afghan Right Wing had a strength of 15,000 Rohillas. Just then the Maratha cavalry, detailed under Vithal Shivdeo and other captains, broke their ranks and advanced into Ibrahim Khan's foot-soldiers, soon out-pacing and out-flanking them. This, however, did not last long, for the Rohilla fire—their match-locks fired heavier bullets and had a far steadier aim—was too much for them and they had to fall back, behind the chained guns, to their original positions. In the bargain, they had broken the order of battle, suffered heavy casualties and had returned, exhausted and demoralised†.

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*It is reported that before the battle began Ibrahim Khan had marched to the Bhau and had given him his plighted word: "To-day I shall discharge my duty". *Kashi Raj*, 24.

Previously, he had rejected a number of offers from the Afghan king and his allies to join them in the holy crusade they were waging. *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 142 mentions 25 such letters with their seals intact shown to Bhau by Gardi.

†"This breach of order had a disastrous moral effect on the frontal troops". Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

Meanwhile Ibrahim Khan's men had taken a heavy toll of the par-Rohillas opposite them and, despite sizeable losses on their own side, inflicted a crushing blow on the enemy. According to Kashi Raj, the Rohillas lost nearly 8,000—9,000 of their men in killed and wounded. Thus the generals Hafiz Rahmat, Dunde Khan and Ahmad Khan Bangash were well-nigh denuded of their troops until a thousand or even five hundred men remained surrounding each, while, thanks to the close fighting, they all lost contact with each other.

Nor were the Maratha losses any the less serious. For, in the bargain, six of Ibrahim Khan's battalions were almost entirely washed out while he himself "received two or three wounds from bullets, arrows and spears*." What the Gardis needed most, after an hour or two of engagement, was light cavalry for, with a stunning charge, it could overwhelm the enemy. Unfortunately, this was something which, owing to the premature and ill-conceived action of the Maratha commanders, we have noticed above, became almost impossible to realise. Damaji Gaikwar, who was perhaps the wisest of the lot detailed to render support had, in the meantime, been reduced to ineffectiveness by a brush with Barkhurdar Khan and Amir Beg's men, the latter endeavouring to cut down the gunners and in the process threatening Ibrahim Khan's two left-over battalions. These, however, had, not unlike the main body under their leader, given a good account of themselves and thrown "the enemy ranks into confusion†".

Even as the Maratha left was the scene of this grim struggle, and it lasted "for full four hours and a half", the centre was witness to another sharp encounter. Here the two sides were nearly evenly balanced—with approximately 18,000 men on each—and this was in sharp contrast to the overwhelming superiority (nearly 5:2) of

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**Kashi Raj*, 24.

So close was the fighting and actually much of the advantage of the disciplined sepoys was neutralised because of the confusion that prevailed—that Dunde Khan had lost complete touch with Hafiz Rahmat who, not quite well that day, was leading his men by sitting in a 'palki'.

†It has been contended that Damaji's contingent was less than 3,000 strong, and "not first-rate fighting material", nor had it ever before faced North Indian campaigning conditions. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 244.

Kashi Raj, 24 tells us that Damaji Gaikwad's men "exerted themselves well", their commander receiving three wounds in the bargain.

the Rohillas of Hafiz Rahmat and Dunde Khan as against the Gardis. Again, in sharp contrast to the men on the Right, or the left, the troops engaged at the Centre were of the very best—Bhau's Banner and the Peshwa's Household pitted against the Shah's own finest cavalry, with the 1,000 camel-swivels manned by Persian bombardiers thrown in.

Fighting here commenced with the light Maratha artillery, placed in front of Bhau's men, firing its first rounds. This was a signal for Shah Vali Khan to advance towards the Maratha positions and before long his camel-swivels had wiped off or, more appropriately, sidestepped the enemy's artillery. It was time enough for Bhau to reply to the attack* and, in an instant, the fine Maratha cavalry with its banners held aloft and its shining armour fell upon the Afghans, with their muskets and matchlocks. "A waving forest of long swords and spears flashed in the morning sun, as a vast cavalcade of 13,500 men heaved tumultuosly like one gigantic billow of the ocean and the next instant dashed in resistless sweep" upon the Durrani centre. The momentum of the onslaught was over-powering and despite their heavy casualties, the pace and impact of the Maratha advance was irresistible. It was like an avalanche of unbounded fury†.

It was indeed a close, grim battle. "The fighting was so violent", to use the inimitable words of Kashi Raj, "that the earth and sky could not be seen and the eye of heaven became dazzled at beholding this spectacle‡".

The Afghan casualties were heavy. The Marathas "drank up" the Wazir's men "like the waters of a river." And what with the dead and the wounded and the runaways, the Durrani ranks visibly

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*According to Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 244, "Simultaneously with Ibrahim Khan's advance against the Shah's right wing, the Bhau had launched his own division in an attack on the Durrani centre....."

Professor Shejwalkar, op.cit. p 89, however, contends that "the Wazir, stationed at the centre, advanced and came into contact with Bhau's right wing", and as there were no infantry battalions to support it, Bhau had himself to come to its rescue and thus it was that the Peshwa's Huzurat came into contact with Shah Vali's troops.

†"The impetuous onslaught of the Maratha cavalry has always been most formidable", and now Bhau and his men "charged in the desperation with the utmost impetuosity and terrible effect". Sidney J. Owen, "*The Fall of the Mogul Empire*" (London, 1912), p. 259.

‡*Kashi Raj*, 25.

thinned. A principal victim of Maratha fury was Haji Atai Khan who, as we noticed earlier, had slain Govindpant Bundele, and now fell in the field with nearly 3,000 other troopers. So complete was the slaughter that a few hundred men and a bare fifty camels, with their 'Zamburkas', was all that stood between Shah Vali Khan and the advancing Maratha van-guards. The Wazir is said to have dismounted from his horse and, in an agony of despair, sat forlorn, beating his head. Soon he was raving at his fleeing soldiers: "Comrades, *vilayat* is far off", he cried, "whither are you going"? But no one seemed to be paying much heed to his exhortations. Presently, recognising Kashi Raj among the men who stood around him, he beckoned to him to carry a message post-haste to "my son, Shuja-ud-daulah", bidding him rush to his (Wazir's) aid for "if he does not support me immediately, I must perish*."

His despair, however, seems to have mounted up for while no immediate succour was forthcoming† his adversaries appeared to be carrying the day. Soon he was throwing dust into his mouth—the dust of humiliation, and what then looked like an impending defeat on the battlefield. Actually, the whole Centre had been thrown into confusion and though the Wazir held his ground and made a determined bid to rally his fleeing supporters, a disorderly retreat began. Unfortunately, neither on the Left wing, where the Gardis had driven a deep wedge into the numerically far superior Rohilla ranks, nor in the Centre, where the Wazir now faced certain defeat, could the Maratha forces drive home the advantage which their initial successes had conferred upon them‡. It has been contended that this was largely due to their lack of a heavily-armoured unit of cavalry which could consolidate the gains that had been

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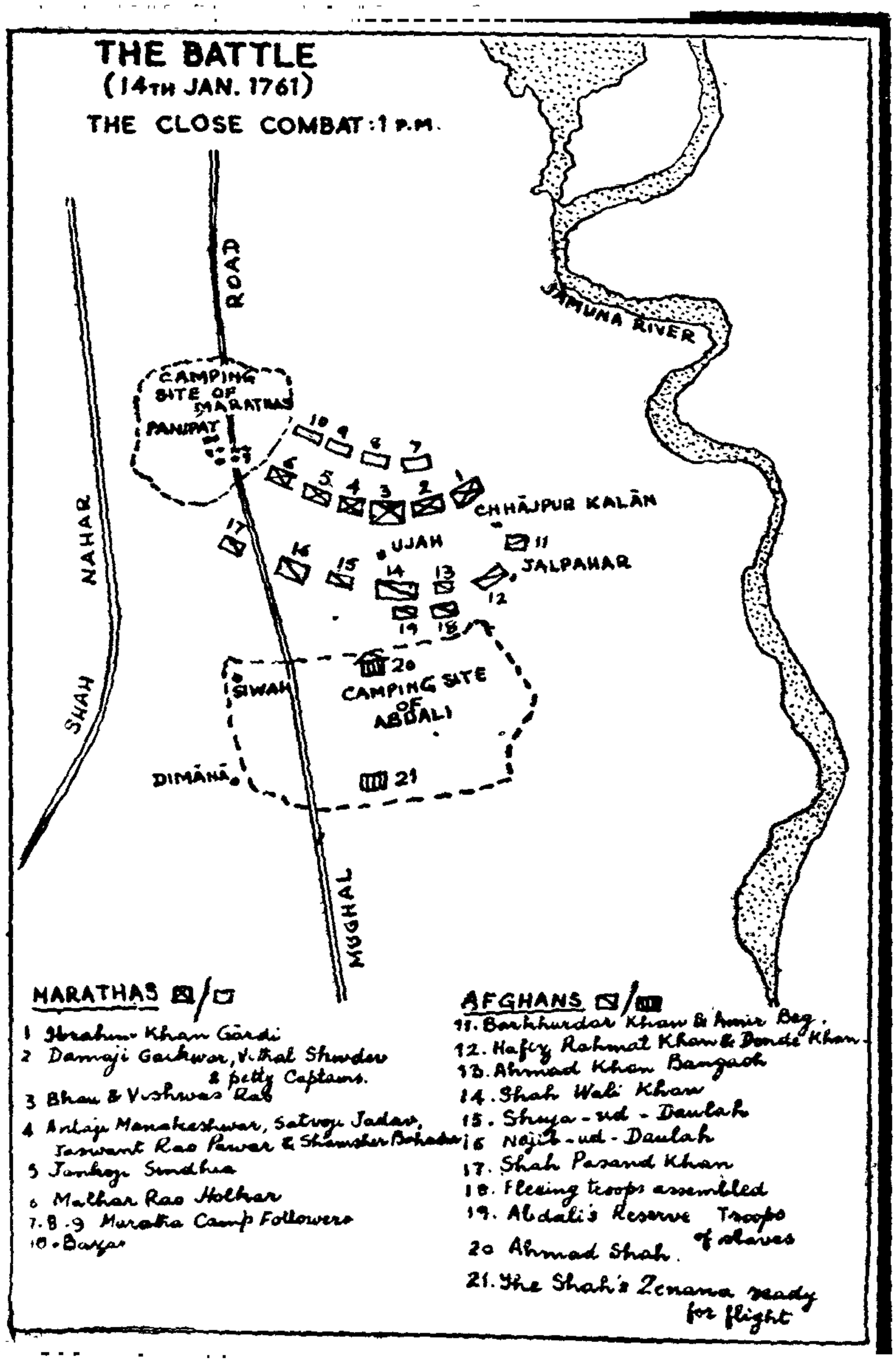
*Kashi Raj in H.G. Rawlinson, *op. cit.*, 37.

†For Shuja kept his own counsel and arguing that enemy troops were at hand and might pierce through the gap likely to be created in the line of battle by his moving away, refused to budge from his position. It has been aptly remarked that on the battlefield at Panipat the Nawab Wazir of Avadh, "neither fled, nor fought."

‡"A comprehensive survey of the state of affairs at this period of the battle might well have inclined an unprofessional spectator to take a more decidedly un-, favourable view of the Shah's prospect of success, in spite of his superior numbers the stronger physique of his soldiers and the inefficiency of the Maratha artillery, on which the Bhau had so confidently relied". Owen, *op. cit.*, 261.


THE BATTLE
(14TH JAN. 1761)
THE CLOSE COMBAT : 1 P.M.
ROAD
NAHAR
SHAH
MUGHAL
CAMPING SITE OF MARATHAS
PANIPAT
CHHAJPUR KALAN
UJAH
JALPAHAR
SIWAH
CAMPING SITE OF ABDALI
DIMANA
SAMUNA RIVER
MARATHAS
1 Ibrahim Khan Gardi
2 Damaji Gaikwar, Vithal Shivdev & petty Captains.
3 Bhau & Vishwas Rao
4 Antaji Manakeshwar, Satvoji Jadav, Jaswant Rao Pawar & Shamsher Bahadur
5 Jankoji Sindhia
6 Malhar Rao Holkar
7.8.9 Maratha Camp Followers
10 Bazar
AFGHANS
11. Barkhurdar Khan & Amir Beg.
12. Hafiz Rahmat Khan & Dunde Khan
13. Ahmad Khan Bangash
14. Shah Wali Khan
15. Shuja-ud-Daulah
16 Najib-ud-Daulah
17. Shah Pasand Khan
18. Fleeing troops assembled
19. Abdali's Reserve Troops of slaves
20 Ahmad Shah.
21. The Shah's Zenana ready for flight

registered and thus maintain the initiative their forces had so heroically wrested*.

The lacuna was indeed serious but even where, as on the Maratha Left, cavalry support had been provided for, it failed to discharge its function owing to what may be regarded as faulty planning and lack of disciplined execution. It appears that Bhau could have forced his advantage to the extent that he might have made a push-through in the Wazir's ranks on his way to the river bank. The problem was whether the Abdali's reserves, commanded by him in person, which lay athwart his path would let him proceed unmolested. Besides, there was the large encumberance of women and non-combatant camp followers. Bhau could not leave them alone exposed to the tender mercies of the Afghans, nor would he be certain to ensure their safe escort. There was also the problem of a strict observance of the pledge which the chief commander had given to Ibrahim Gardi namely, that he would not swerve from fighting nor flee, nor leave the battlefield alive†. Thus the lack of the heavy armoured mounted cavalry, it would seem, was not the only hindrance in taking full advantage of the initiative and the sizeable thrusts which both the Maratha Left wing and the Centre had made in the opening stages.

Durrani Reinforcements, Marathas Fight Back

Ahmad Shah's "kizalbashi" tent had been fixed about two kilometres behind the front line of his army and through a pair of binoculars, and an efficient intelligence service he had carefully scanned the battle scene and kept himself fully posted with each phase of the actual fighting, as it developed. Shortly after noon he had learnt of the plight of his Right Wing and of the Centre—of the heavy dispersion at both ends—and the sore straits to which both the Rohillas and Wazir Shah Vali Khan had been reduced. As soon as he heard the news he ordered, as a preliminary precautionary

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*"The Bhau had no squadron of cavalry in heavy armour and mounted on powerful horses ready to charge in close order and cut its way like a solid wedge through the shaken Durrani ranks and complete its initial success". Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 245-6.

†According to *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 142, "Hearing this Bhau gave him (Ibrahim Khan Gardi) another assurance. 'We shall never go leaving you behind. Where you are in trouble, we too shall be killed there, but never shall we run away from the field of battle' ".

measure, his 'Zenana' to mount their "fleet steeds swift as the wind" and keep waiting inside his private pavillion*. Next, he asked one of his officers to repair to the camp at the head of 500 'nasaqchis' (military provosts) and drive out, by sheer brute force, all the stragglers who had taken refuge there. Another officer with 1,500 of the remaining 'nasaqchis', was to march to the battle-front and press back into service—at the point of the gun—all those who had fallen out of line and deserted the front ranks.

The military provosts, true to reputation, seem to have done a thorough job of work, for soon enough the camp brought forth an approximate 2,000—3,000 men who, with a small addition, were rushed to stand behind the par-Rohillas under Hafiz Rahmat. The front too yielded another 6,000—7,000 men whom the Shah now re-inforced with 4,000 of his own personal troops, and hastened to the aid of the much-harassed Wazir†. Thus, within an hour of the intelligence reaching him, the Durrani had sent sizeable reinforcements to the aid of his weakened fronts. After much cool deliberation he had decided not to disturb his Right Wing under Shah Pasand, Najib and Shuja for that might have offered a weak spot for the Marathas to drive in a wedge.

From the scanty details of the battle available in Maratha chronciles there is no clear-cut indication to suggest that, like Abdali the Bhau too maintained a dependable line of communications which kept him informed of the battle, in its changing fortunes. Thus, did the Maratha generalissimo know of Ibrahim Khan's advance on his left and the near-slaughter of his men, of the serious breach of the order of battle committed by the cavalry leaders, detailed behind him? Was he aware that about two kilometres separated the advance-guard of the Gardis from the chained guns which now stood mute‡?

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*Muhammad Ja'far Shamlu, *op. cit.*, 153. Here it is clear enough evidence, if such were indeed needed, to show that the Maratha attack had unnerved the Shah and that the thought of a possible defeat and flight—crossed his mind and that like a good general he provided for the contingency, should it eventuate.

†*Kashi Raj*, 26-7.

Professor Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 90 contends that the camp yielded "within an hour 8,000 armed men, mostly foot-soldiers" and that these were rushed to aid the Durrani hard-pressed Right Wing. He has, however, cited no authority in support of his contention.

‡It is not even clear whether the Maratha cavalry, under Vithal Shivdeo, and Damaji Gaikwar who stood behind the chained guns, was fully aware of the heavy casualties in Ibrahim Khan's battalions and the desperate need in which he stood for some immediate help.

Should he have known, it stands to reason, he would have, short of himself rushing to Ibrahim Khan's aid, directed the cavalry leaders to march forward again to the support of the hard-pressed and easily out-numbered infantry which had been slaughtered indeed, in vain? Another pertinent question that calls for an answer is whether, apart from disturbing his front line of battle, there were any reserves which could be thrown in—either on the Maratha Left or even at their Centre*?

The relative ease with which these questions can be asked does not necessarily imply a facility in answering them. From all available evidence, culled together, an over-powering impression grows that the Maratha chief did not have a clear picture of the waxing and waning fortunes of the battle at the different fronts, nor would it seem had any adequate reserves been kept by him to be thrown in, in case of need†. The fact that he himself was engaged in actual battle would seem to show that planning and constant observation, necessary concomitants to such action, were completely lacking on the Maratha side. A grim conclusion indeed, yet nonetheless of momentous significance. For, in the final analysis, the most critical phase of the battle was reached between 12 noon and 1 p.m. when the side which could throw in fresh troops was bound to weigh the scales heavily against its adversary.

Thus by an hour after mid-day, Ahmad Shah had been able to put in sizeable fresh re-inforcements, both on his Right Wing and at

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*G.S. Sardesai, "*A New History of the Marathas*", (Bombay, 1948), 3 Vols., Vol. ii, 439, maintains that Bhau Saheb "could not keep any portion in reserve, as the whole camp was intended to force a passage through the Afghan ranks". Earlier however, the author concedes (*Ibid.* 438-9) that the original Maratha plan had to be abadoned and Bhau Saheb "precipitately reformed his men in a long line similar to that of the enemy." The question is whether, in this process of re-formation, care was taken to set aside some reserves.

†Professor Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 74 quotes Nana Farnavis saying in his "Autobiography" that Bhau had "anticipated all possibilities in the conduct of war and provided for them as best he could." However, in the full text "Autobiographical Memoir" translated by Lieutenant Colonel Briggs, and cited earlier, the relevant portion reads: "His Highness (Bhau), though wise, valiant and experienced, had latterly become proud and arrogant, and although the arrangement for the action was good, yet he did not attend to it himself, nor did others. Confusion prevailed in every direction." Nana Farvavis, *op. cit.*, 168.

Does the expression "the arrangement for the action was good" comprehend that "all possibilities in the conduct of war" had been "anticipated", and "provided for"?

the Centre, without at the same time weakening his Left. The Marathas had had, in the meantime, hardly any replenishments, not to talk of fresh troops. Again, after 4–4½ hours of brisk fighting their half-famished bodies must have been quite exhausted. In a camp where both food and fodder over the last fortnight or so, had become extremely scarce, if not indeed non-existent, there may not have been much to carry on the average soldier's person for himself, not to say for his beast. Nor, with the fresh enemy combatants now thrown in, was any respite immediately in sight. The odds thus must have weighed heavily against Bhau's men in the resumed fighting now promised.

While sending in fresh troops, Ahmad Shah had directed the Wazir, at the Centre, to gallop forth, sword in hand, and charge the enemy with full force*. Meantime he had ordered the troops both on his right and left flanks to charge, and penetrate the enemy divisions opposite, every time the Grand Wazir attacked the Maratha force. The Rohillas too, with the new injection of fresh troops, were expected to push back the enemy and retrieve their lost ground. This combined assault was certain not only to blunt the edge of Maratha successes, registered earlier in the day, but wrest the initiative decisively from their hands.

One part of the front we have hitherto let go untouched. This was the Abdali Left, where Shah Pasand Khan at the extreme end and Najib and Shuja-ud-daulah† to his right faced the combined forces for most part of Malharrao Holkar, Jankoji, Mahadji and Tukoji Sindhia and among others such captains as Shamsher

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**Kashi Raj*, 27.

†Shuja-ud-daulah had, at a critical phase in the fighting at the centre been asked to rush to the assistance of the Wazir. This he did not for fear, as we have noticed, he might expose his part of the front by creating a gap in the line of battle.

Ali Muhammad Khan, in "*Mirat-i-Ahmadi*" Vol. ii, 596 maintains that "A disastrous defeat was about to fall on the Shah's army when Shuja-ud-daulah, in concert with Najib, charged the waist of the Deccan army and slew most of the sardars on that side", quoted in "The Earliest Persian Account of Panipat, 1761" by Sir J.N. Sarkar, "Sardesai Commemoration Volume", *op. cit.*, 260.

This version which Sarkar has dubbed as "utterly false" has been upheld by W. Franklin, "*The History of the Reign of Shah Aulum*", (London, 1798), p. 23. Franklin makes a mention of a body of "fackeers", in the service of Shuja who, at a critical stage in the battle, turned the scales against the Marathas. *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 147, also mentions "Shuja and his companions" attacking the Sindhia and Holkar contingents when "Heavy fighting took place".

Bahadur, Yashwatrao Pawar and Satvoji Jadav. Actually, there was no activity on this part of the front in the first round of the battle*. This was primarily due to three reasons. One, at this end the distance that separated the Maratha advance-guards, from Abdali's men opposite, was roughly 5 kilometres—thus the opposing troops here stood farther apart from each other, than on any other part of the front. Again, either by their own choice or by Bhau's deliberate decision, the Holkar-Sindhia contingents had been placed where they were with a view that they may not have to bear the brunt of any major assaults from the enemy. For, over the past couple of years, they had met Abdali's men in the field nearly three to four times and had the misfortune of being defeated in every single encounter. Their morale, thus, could not be expected to be very high†.

Finally, the reason for the relative quiescence of this front lay in the fact that the two sides, by just standing where they were, sought to neutralise each other. By swerving farther on to the right, Holkar was bound to break the line of battle—and this he was determined not to do. Besides, the plan of battle, which the Marathas initially envisaged, called not so much for a fight that day but avoidance of action, unless forced, and a push-through to the ground behind the Afghan lines—with decisive battles on the morrow or the day following.

To this general rule of lack of activity on the Durrani's Left there had been one exception. Najib-ud-daulah who was very conscious of his special, almost pivotal, role in the battle, and particularly determined not to make any mistakes, for his stakes were probably the highest‡, had begun moving farther ahead towards the enemy. A cool, calculating mind, brave and adventurous,

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*G.S. Sardesai, *op. cit.*, 441, however, talks of the "Maratha left and right wings and the centre" maintaining "a grim struggle for the first few hours" and again of "the Sindhia-Holkar sweep from the Maratha right against Najib Khan and Shah Pasand".

†This fact, incidentally, had given them first-hand knowledge of Abdali's tactics and, thus armed, they were determined not to act impetuously or offer battle, unless attacked.

‡"I am the bridegroom of this battle-field", Najib is often reported to have said, "Everything rests on my head: the other (allies) are mere guests ('barati') accompanying the marriage procession. What is done here will be done by me and to me". *Kashi Raj*, 26.

even as he was clever and crafty, Najib had converted all his troops, 15,000 of them, into infantry. His movement, however, was an ingenious one. From his very large and abundant supply of rockets he would fire nearly 2,000 of them, all at once, creating a lot of noise and a thick pall of smoke: "their smoke darkened the ground and the sky and their noise deafened the ears of the earth and the time*". Behind this impenetrable smoke-screen, he would move his troops on foot and, as they progressed every quarter of a mile they would throw up breast-works of sand, a few steps in front of the line. This was designed both to protect, or offer 'cover' for their advance and serve, at the same time, as an elevated ground from which to fire the next consignment of rockets. His progress, by the very nature of this slow action, could not have been very striking and, we are told, that by 1 p.m. he had covered 4 kilometres. But he had achieved two major aims: he had succeeded in frightening the enemy, and in making it immobile, and† covered his retreat extremely cleverly—should this eventuality be forced on him. Besides, he now stood at 1 p.m. within a little more than a long-range musket-shot of Sindhia's troops opposite.

No sooner had the Wazir received fresh troops, he led his men with full force into Bhau's ranks. The Marathas fought back furiously and refused to yield ground. It must have been a very close combat for the Maratha cavalry was of the best—and so were the Shah's personal troops, well-fed and well-accoutred. The battle too was well-joined: "the white spray of uplifted dust, stabbed by the fire flash and sharp rattle of musketry concealed for a time the red heaps of writhing horses and men that strewed the plain as the surf retired, shivered into small eddying fragments‡".

At its most violent the action lasted a little over an hour when, "by Ahmad Sultan's good fortune", a zamburak ball struck Vishwasrao, the 17-year old son of the Peshwa who was the nominal

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**Loc. cit.*

†According to *Kashi Raj*, 26, the troops of the Sindhia contingent wanted to attack Najib, but got no chance because "every minute they were convulsed by the shock of this fire." Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 94, repudiates this suggestion and puts forth the view that Bhau had deliberately isolated the Sindhia and Holkar units on the rear-flanks of his hollow square, for fear their chicken-hearted action on the battlefield might not demoralise the rest of the army.

‡Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 249-50.

Commander-in-Chief of the Maratha forces, on the forehead*. Vishwas, true to his blood, had been fighting by Bhau's side in the very thick of the battle when the fatal blow befell him. The news completely shook Bhau and, spreading like wild fire in the Maratha camp, sharply dampened the morale of the army. Overcome by filial loyalty, Bhau had the dead body placed on his own gold-and-diamond-caparisoned elephant to have a last look on his nephew, an eloquent symbol of the flower of Maratha manhood†, that shed its last drop of blood on that gory field.

Vishwasrao's death was the signal for the rout that could not be delayed much longer. Two factors helped it. One, a contingent of 2,000 renegade Afghans, employed in the Maratha army, who had taken their place by the side of the cavalry led by Damaji Gaikwar and Vithal Shivdeo on the Left now discarded their ochre-coloured distinguishing head-gear and began looting the Maratha camp. Taking advantage of their chief's death, and detaching themselves from the cavalry units—who foolishly enough failed to check them—these Afghans created havoc in the already shaken ranks of the army, no less than among the non-combatants. With highly exaggerated accounts of Maratha defeat which they now spread, not a few imagined that Abdali's own men had managed to reach their positions and were doing what was expected of them‡.

Meanwhile just about the time Vishwasrao lay prostrate, the Abdali had rushed to the Centre six units of his select corps of

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*Muhammad J'afar Shamlu, *op. cit.*, 154. Also see *Nur-ud-din*, 52. The words within quotation marks are those of Shamlu.

Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 250 maintains that the Peshwa's son "was shot dead with a bullet." In the first edition of this work (p. 341), however, the author had mentioned that Vishwasrao died after receiving "a sword-cut in the neck and an arrow wound on his left eye-brow".

†Taken to the enemy's camp, Vishwasrao's handsome figure extorted a generous tribute even from the fierce Durranis: "though he was an Indian, yet no man of such light complexion and beautiful shape had ever come in their sight. His colour was that of a champa flower.....his limbs well formed, his arms reaching down to his knees.....", *Kashi Raj*, 29.

‡*Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 148 mentions the fact that Vithal Shivdeo had been responsible for employing these 'Gilzais'.

Neither Kashi Raj, nor any other Persian historian makes a mention of the contingent being employed by the Marathas.

Professor Shejwalkar, *op, cit.*, 93, who underlines the dastardly role played by this corps, who may even be "Indian Rohillas", contends that they had been employed "without forethought" and played havoc "at this critical juncture."

slaves, the 'bashgulls*' who were directed completely to hedge in Bhau's men. Splitting themselves into three divisions, of two units each , they went round and round the Maratha commander's increasingly thinning ranks. "One squadron of these slaves", Nur-ud-din tells us, "numbering 2,000, which makes a complete squadron, advanced from the right and firing their muskets proceeded to the left. Another squadron advanced from the left and after firing their muskets proceeded to the right. The third squadron which advanced from the front proceeded to the rear†". Even as they would return to the charge—and the action was repeated again and again—they would have loaded their muskets afresh.

What with the 'bashgulls' and the 1,500 camel swivels‡, which were thrown in simultaneously, the toll of Maratha lives, in ranks which were continuously being depleted now, was bound to be very heavy. The wonder is that despite these increasingly powerful and—almost overwhelming—onslaughts, the Maratha commander managed to deliver as many as three heavy counter-charges. Every time he fell back, he rallied his men afresh and, with as powerful an impact as he could command, charged his adversaries§.

Meantime, both on the Maratha Left as well as the Right, the Durranis were gaining an upper hand and, what was more, driving their advantage home. With fresh men, Hafiz Rahmat's Rohillas on the Right had delivered a massive blow on what were now no more than Ibrahim Khan's poor remnants of infantry. He fought heroically—both his son and brother-in-law were killed in the field—and was wounded thrice¶. But the overwhelming Rohilla numbers

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*The "bashgulls", who were kept in reserve, were a select force of 6,000 Qizalbash of the Shah's own personal body-guard, provided with fine young horses, freshly imported. They regarded themselves as the Shah's faithful slaves, receiving special treatment in food and dress. *Tarikh-e-Husain Shahi*, 71, refers to these troops of the Shah as Dasta-e-Ghulaman Saf Shikan.

†*Nur-ud-din*, 51-2.

‡Ahmad Shah had pressed these "zamboorak" camels into service against Bhau's men after Vishwasrao's death. They had been directed to fire their (1500) rounds all at once. *Nur-ud-din*, 52.

§According to *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 152 the Bhau used all possible stratagems to hold back his fleeing soldiery. Once he ordered even the drums of victory to be beaten, "but even this method did not check the retreat".

¶According to *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 150, Ibrahim continued fighting even when he had been wounded and was captured only when he could not use his weapons.

which had earlier yielded ground only grudgingly, pushed him back as well as the cavalry which stood behind, for his support. Damaji was wounded and retired safely and so did Vithal Shivdeo, while Ibrahim Khan was taken prisoner. Resistance had ebbed out and the fine battalions of Ibrahim were now no more than a heap of dead bodies.

On the Maratha Right, as we have noticed earlier, Najib's Rohillas had, by 1 p.m. , reached within a long musket-shot of Jankoji's men. As he neared*, Najib's men drove a clear wedge into the Sindhia cavalry, a part of it under Jankoji now swerving to its left, towards the Centre, and thereby separating themselves from their own rear. As the gap widened, Najib's men pressed hard into ranks already bamboozled by the calamitous news of Vishwasrao's death. Meanwhile the Abdali, it has already been remarked, had asked Shah Pasand Khan to launch an attack on the Maratha flanks to time in with Shah Vali Khan's own assaults, at the Centre. With Shah Pasand closing in, Malharrao Holkar seems to have taken his decision to flee† and carried with him that part of Jankoji's contingent, under Mahadji and others, which had broken

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*"As the Maratha plan was to march on to the river-side before the evening and not to fight a battle", naturally no one from the Sindhia side advanced to attack Shuja or Najib. Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 94.

The argument is not very convincing for, by this time, it must have been quite clear to every-one, that the earlier plan had been completely abandoned. In fact, at no stage did it seem to have worked.

†Nur-ud-din, *op.cit.*, 54, maintains that "Malharrao escaped through the favour of Najib-ud-daulah", repeated in H.G. Keene, "*Sindhia*", Rulers of India Series, (Oxford, 1891), p. 43. This suggestion has been strongly scouted by Professor Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 95 who maintains that with Shah Pasand swerving to his right, in obedience to Abdali's orders, the Maratha rear was freed "from the watch of Shah Pasand Khan's flank advance." Besides, Malhar's whole philosophy of life was to run the least risk and probably he was not prepared to stake his life in what must have seemed to him a foolhardy adventure. Again, he was an old man (nearly 80 years) not expected to take a very active part in the battle. The charge of treachery has been repeated (Owen, *op. cit.*, 264) but would not seem to hold water. Holkar's action must be studied against the background of his whole life, and not as an isolated instance.

James Grant Duff, "*History of the Marathas*", (London, 1878), 3 Vols , Vol. i, 618 repeats the story of the Bhau sending a message to Malhar Holkar "to do as he has directed."

from the main body*. And now with Najib and Shah Pasand pressing hard on Jankoji's men it was clear that the escape route for Bhau had been securely closed. In fact, earlier during the day, Shah Pasand had stood athwart the Imperial road and thus obstructed an ideal (escape) route for Holkar's contingent too.

The Final Rout

After Vishwasrao's death the battle had taken a decisive turn for the worse, so far as the Marathas were concerned. Not only was the news a stunning blow to any lingering doubts for a better fortune that day, but from the Bhau down to the meanest trooper, and the non-combatant, it came as a bolt from the blue which spelt the beginning of the end†. It has already been noticed that the Durrani, consummate master of the art of war that he was, had used this psychological moment for rushing in, at the Centre, his 6,000 'Bash-gulls' and 1,500 fresh camel swivels. The back of Maratha resistance was nearly broken now and Bhau's repeated charges, alluded to above, were eloquent not so much of the means to resistance that he commanded but a tribute to his own desperate bravery in what must have seemed to him now a forlorn, hopeless cause.

Meantime, as has been observed, Shah Pasand's troops to his right had closed in and, pressing hard on Jankoji's men, made a rear escape impossible. The front was blocked by Shah Vali Khan's men who, with their fresh reinforcements, were taking a heavy toll of Maratha life. The 'Bashgulls', on Bhau's two flanks meant that a large Maratha force, with its principal field commanders, was now completely surrounded. It was this encirclement which elicited from Bhau and his immediate troops the reaction of true soldiers. Again, with ranks getting thinner every minute that passed—for every Durrani bullet was now bound to find its billet in a Maratha breast —a brave, but hopeless, struggle ensued: the remnant "turned into a knot which twisted itself this way and that at each attack until

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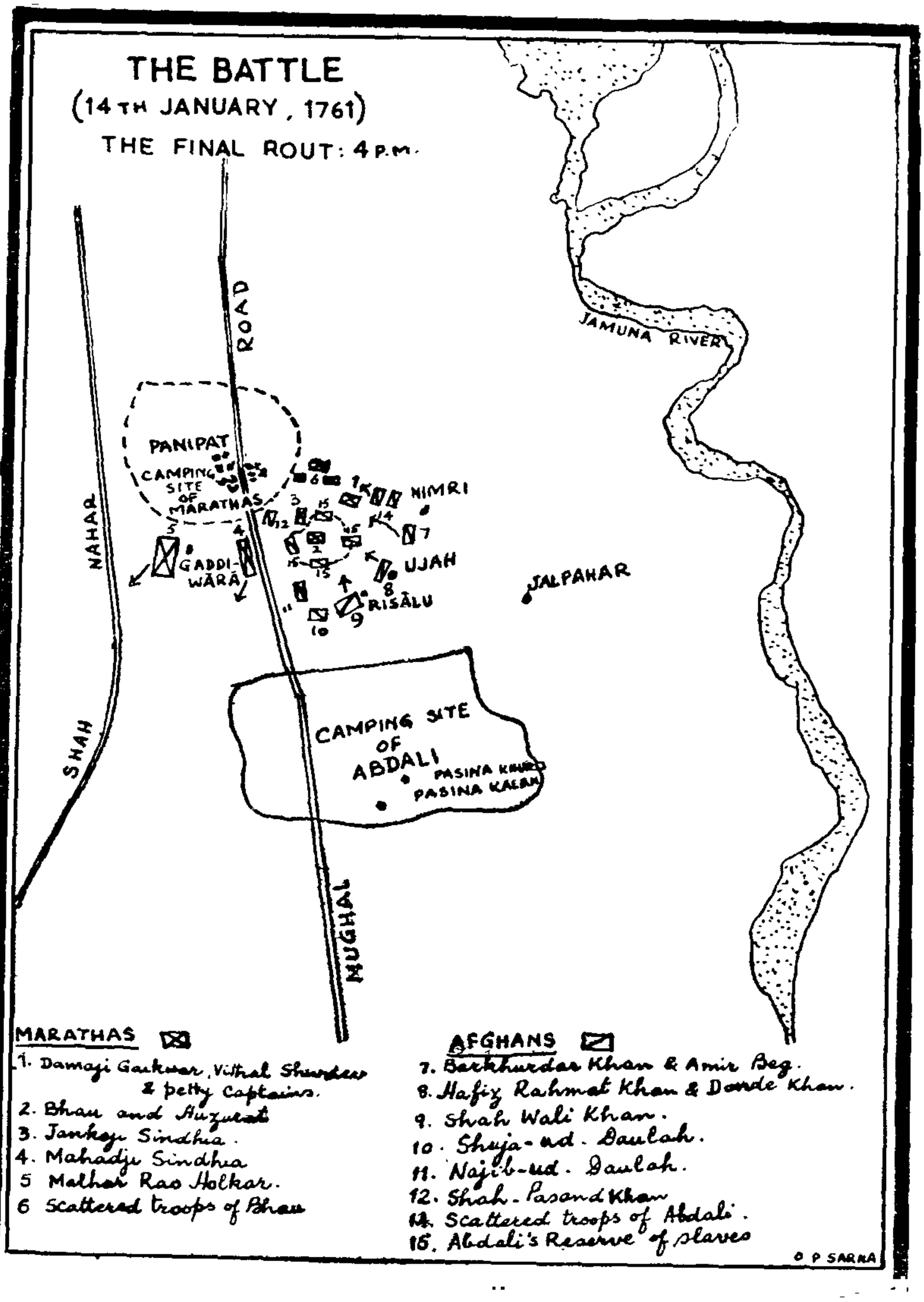
*Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 253, maintains that Jankoji was deserted by most of his men from behind and "with only a few personal friends and a fraction of his vanguard around him" was wounded and driven eastwards upon the Bhau's corps in the Centre.

†*Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 147-9, gives a graphic account of the shock that the death gave to the whole rank and file of the Maratha army. The sight of Parvati-bai, Bhau's wife, beating her forehead and breasts on seeing the dead body is touching.

The Bakhar relates that Bhau lost heart for a-while but determined at once that he would kill "the Gilzai Khan", the Durrani Shah, and exhorted his soldiers to do likewise.


THE BATTLE
(14TH JANUARY, 1761)
THE FINAL ROUT: 4 P.M.
NAHAR
SHAH
ROAD
MUGHAL
PANIPAT
CAMPING SITE OF MARATHAS
CAMPING SITE OF ABDALI
PASINA KHURD
PASINA KALAN
NIMRI
UJAH
RISĀLU
GADDI-WĀRĀ
JALPAHAR
JAMUNA RIVER
MARATHAS
1. Damaji Gaikwar, Vithal Shivdev & petty Captains.
2. Bhau and Huzuratis
3. Jankoji Sindhia.
4. Mahadji Sindhia
5 Malhar Rao Holkar.
6 Scattered troops of Bhau
AFGHANS
7. Barkhurdar Khan & Amir Beg.
8. Hafiz Rahmat Khan & Dunde Khan.
9. Shah Wali Khan.
10. Shuja-ud. Daulah.
11. Najib-ud. Daulah.
12. Shah-Pasand Khan
14. Scattered troops of Abdali.
16. Abdali's Reserve of slaves
O P SARNA

completely withered away by death*." It would thus seem that within less than an hour of Vishwasrao's death resistance at the Centre completely collapsed and "in the twinkle of an eye the Maratha army vanished like camphor, and none remained in the field except heaps of corpses here and there†." But this was not before Bhau had changed his mount thrice and had been joined by Tukoji and Jankoji—actually, the former had advised him to escape from the field and take a last chance, as it were‡. At the end, he is said to have been riding a poor country mare and was in the very thick of the fighting.

Death no longer frightened him, for life itself had lost all meaning. He did not die, as has been contended, on the grave of his reputation , nor of the imperial dreams of his race§. With all the limitation of circumstances placed upon him, with the instruments which he had ready to hand, with the adversaries he had to contend with—not to talk of quite some generations of unsympathetic, if not indeed positively hostile, historians—Bhau did not do a bad job. One wonders if Raghoba could have done better, or even the Peshwa himself, for that matter. Nor were the imperical dreams of the Marathas buried with Bhau at Panipat. It was a partial set-back which was, at best, temporary,—never a total eclipse.

Before his death, Bhau had received a spear wound and a musket shot in the thigh—the latter had thrown him down on the ground. As he was lurching along on the field, some Durrani horsemen attacked him. "The wounded lion turned at bay" and struck two or three of his assailants with his spear before he was himself killed and his head chopped off and carried away by his slayers. It is

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*Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 96.

†According to *Kashi Raj*, 27, the battle lasted only for one 'ghari', after Vishwasrao's death. Since the Peshwa's son died at 2-30, the fighting would seem to have ended at about 3. See Sarkar, *op.cit.*, 253.

Nana Farnavis, *op. cit.*, 169 tells us that he reached Panipat, after parting company with Bhau, "just as the sun set in the Heavens."

‡*Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 152 recounts a long drawnout argument between Tukoji and Bhau, the former insisting that unless he (Bhau) was saved they could not later take revenge, the Maratha leader, however, chary of facing Nana Saheb, repeated again and again, "We shall not run away."

§Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 251.

believed that Bhau was fighting to the very last, till only 200 men remained by his side*.

Even before resistance at the Centre was at an end, the confused Maratha army had run pell-mell in all directions†. It has already been noticed that the Maratha right wing had disappeared with the flight of Malharrao's contingent, accompanied by a part of Sindhia's. On the left, after Ibrahim Khan's arrest and the butchering of his infantry, the supporting cavalry had taken to its heels, too. Now was time for Barkhurdar Khan and Amir Beg to close in as, of course, for Shuja and Najib to partake of the victory that had been won—by others' arms‡. The pursuit of the runaway fugitives was rapid and inexorable. Perhaps inevitably the consequent slaughter must have been gruesome, for on the morrow countless heaps of the dead and the dying littered the field and the surrounding countryside, for miles on end. No quarter was given by a cruel, unrelenting enemy, but equally plainly a proud, self-respecting army had asked for none.

**Kashi Raj* 33-4.

Shejwalkar, *op. cit.*, 96 while accepting Kashi Raj's account of the finding of Bhau's trunk first and of his head afterwards repudiates the story of his last struggle as narrated (to Kashi Raj) by a Durrani soldier.

Nana Farnavis, *op. cit.*, 169 tells us that when he left Bhau, and turned his face towards Panipat, "Only 200 men were left with the Maratha commander." Shejwalkar, *op.cit.*, 96, however, puts the figure, in Nana Farnavis, at 50 men.

Neither Maratha chroncilers, nor Panipat tradition, accepts the fact of Bhau's death. *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, p. 153 confesses its author did not know what his end was: "he disappeared into the sky or entered the earth, God's miracle, even God does not know....." Later (p. 155) the writer states that Bhau entered Panipat city and "from there he went whichever way he cared."

†According to *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, p. 151, "people lost direction. Which side to run was not clear."

‡"Only at the end of the day, when all was almost over at the Maratha centre and left wing, and the entire Afghan line was advancing, Shah Pasand and Najib made an onset upon their opponents." Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 253. As for the Nawab Wazir of Avadh, we have Kashi Raj's testimony, "None moved from the enemy's side against this (Shuja's troops) body. Twice or thrice their swords and spears flashed in the sunlight at a distance, as if they were about to sally forth on a charge but it did not take place, and the thing passed off safely for us." *Kashi Raj*, 25.

CHAPTER XIX

MARATHA CASUALTIES AND THE SPOILS OF THE VICTORS

Loss of Human Lives

The human carnage at Panipat must have been very heavy for the Maratha general, despite his own unquestioned personal bravery, had given no thought whatsoever to the problem of an orderly retreat or a falling back of the army, in case of a military defeat. Actually the debacle itself had been complete and the Maratha rout unqualified. Hence both on the field and among the fleeing, runaway soldiery, the number of the fallen and the dead was bound to be very large*.

Certain factors helped swell these numbers. Thus January 14 was a clear moonlit night, the 8th day of the bright half of the month, a fact that enabled the pursuers to chase their victims until close to midnight not only in the immediate vicinity of Panipat, but even upto a distance of 30 kilometres in† the country around. That the pursuit was thorough is borne out by the plight through which some of the pursued actually passed‡. For those who escaped

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*According to *Kashi Raj*, 32, on the morrow of Abdali's victory thirty-two mounds of the slain, "some containing a hundred, some 500, 700 or 1,000 bodies, and at three or four places 1,500 each", were counted on the battlefield.

Earlier, *Ibid*, 28, the same writer tells us, "People were put to the sword beyond numbering. The surface of the land was covered with corpses; who could count them ?"

†"It was a moon-lit night; the Shah's troops carried on the pursuit for 10 'kos' in every direction, slaying everyone they could overtake", *Kashi Raj*, 28. Ten 'kos' would be approximately 30 kilometres.

Sarkar, *op.cit.*, 254 suggests that it (slaughter) was for "a distance of 20 miles (32 kilometres) in a fan-shaped semi-circle."

‡Nana Farnavis, himself one of the runaways, had a hard time. Disguised as a mendicant and originally in the company of two others, he alone finally escaped. And this was not because he was not caught up—twice he was—but because his youth (he was 16) and frail, lean figure elicited pity in the heart of his assailants. "He is but a boy", they argued, "let him go". Nana Farnavis, *op. cit.*, 169-70.

[Mahadji Sindhia also fled on a fine Deccani mare with silver trappings. He was pursued for about 150 kilometres, seriously wounded and lamed for life, and deprived of his caparison. *Husain Shahi*, 72-3. *Editor*]

unhurt, it would seem that the lead which they had taken in their flight from the field must have given them a handsome start.

A second major factor was the ditch which had been dug around the Maratha entrenchments. Whatever its use earlier, it now proved to be a veritable graveyard for many a fleeing soldier and his beast. Actually, it was found later to be choked with dead bodies. Besides, the winter cold of Panipat must have claimed a large number among the dying and the wounded and the disabled who lay exposed, and unattended. There was also the unbounded zeal of the Durrani soldiers and quite a few others among the faithful*, for killing the infidels—often times helpless and innocent non-combatants and camp followers—to earn their requisite dole of religious piety. According to Kashi Raj:

> "The Durrani troops brought away a hundred or two hundred of prisoners and put them to the sword in the outskirts of their camp, crying out, 'when I srarted from 'Vilayat' my mother, father, sister and wife told me to slay so many kafirs for their sake after gaining the victory in this holy war, so that the religious merit of this act (of infidel-slaying) might accrue to them'. In this way thousands of soldiers and other persons were massacred. In the Shah's camp except the quarters of himself and his nobles, every tent had a heap of severed heads before it. One may say that it was verily Doomsday for the Maratha people†".

Estimates of numbers are extremely varied and some not easily acceptable—thus Kashiraj's statement, alluded to above, that every Durrani soldier brought away a hundred or two of prisoners leads to fantastic figures. Even if 10,000 of them repeated the performance, the number of prisoners brought in—reckoning it by the lower figure of 100, and not 200—must have been 10,00,000 or nearly three times the outside figure of three and a half lakhs of the total

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*According to *Bhau Saheb Bakhar;* 158, the sons of Abdus Samad and Mian Qutab Shah sought the Durrani ruler's permission to avenge their father's death. The Abdali is reported to have acceded to their request: "from here to twenty kos' you can slaughter for four ghatikas."

Qutab Shah's son killed 4,000 men near Sonepat and Samad Khan's 5,000, near Bahadurgarh.

†*Kashi Raj,* 28.

number of Marathas at Panipat given us by Muhammad Ja'far Shamlu*.

On a more sober analysis, it would seem that more than half the actual (Maratha) troops present on the field perished there, in number roughly 30,000. Of those that escaped—since the pursuit was swift and unrelenting—a large majority must have been killed or taken prisoner. Among the latter, recknoned at 22,000†, the number of helpless non-combatants was bound to be quite considerable. In turn, this number must have been swollen by the presence of women and children.

Of the 'two pearls' that dissolved—Vishwasrao and Bhau died fighting‡. The former had elicited admiration even from his worst enemies in his hour of death and, on Shuja-ud-dulah's remonstrance, his dead body was permitted to be disposed of according to Hindu rites§. Sadashivrao's own head was found severed from the main trunk and, despite the popular Durrani clamour of taking the stuffed body to Kabul as a trophy, the Shah yielded, as in Vishwasrao's case¶. As a matter of fact, Shuja with the Hindu Gosains in his camp and Kashiraj had paid ransom money for a number of Maratha prisoners who were then let off. One life, however, Shuja failed to save. This was Ibrahim Khan Gardi whose crime, in the eyes of the fanatical Durrani soldiers and even of their ruler, was doubly compounded by the fact that he a Muslim, and an Afghan at that,

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*According to *Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 158, when the gates of Panipat were closed on the day following the battle, 15,000 persons were captured. Later the Bakhar tells us that 20,000 (Maratha) prisoners were kept in the Abdali's army for 2 days and that Shuja-ud-daulah "gave three lakhs to Gilzai and got them released."

†H.R. Gupta, *op. cit.*, 185.

‡Nana Saheb, while crossing the Narbada on his way to the north, intercepted a 'cassid' carrying a message from a 'soucar' in Delhi to his principals in Poona. It read, obviously alluding to the Maratha defeat at Panipat, "Two pearls have been dissolved, 27 gold mohurs have been lost and of the silver and copper, the total cannot be cast up."

Grant Duff, *op. cit.*, 621.

§*Kashi Raj*, 29-30.

According to *Kashi Raj*, 34, Nawab Shuja-ud-daulah entrusted the bodies of Vishwasrao, Bhau and of Santaji Wagh to his (Kashi Raj's) care and he it was who got them washed "with Ganges water and burnt them with sandal wood," watched by 2,000 runaway Maratha fugitives.

¶*Nur-ud-din*, 54-5. Actually the Shah had asked the Wazir to dispose of the matter in a manner he thought best. Shah Vali "being a peace-loving man", handed the body to Shuja who, in turn, entrused it to the care of his Gosains.

fought for the infidel cause. Apostasy could not go further. Thus it was that the numerous wounds on his body seem to have been deliberately neglected and he died, or was beheaded*.

Gardi was among the "27 gold mohurs" who had been lost. Others included Tukoji Sindhia, who died in the thick of the fighting as did Yashwantrao Pawar, and Santaji Wagh†. Jankoji died at the hands of his captors, Antaji Mankeshwar escaped from the field but was killed on his way home, Shamsher Bahadur died later of wounds sustained in battle‡.

The fleeing Maratha soldiery received a somewhat harsh treatment as it passed through Jat country around Panipat, approximating to what we now know as the districts of Rohtak and Hissar. This was largely due to the continuous pillage which their armies had carried in these regions year after year and the hatred and hostility this had bred among the local people§. A haven of safety, however, was to be the Jat kingdom of Surajmal who was extremely considerate to the beaten army, providing many with food, medical attention and even clothing and shelter¶. And but for him, another 50,000 Maratha men and women would have perished. Of the fugitives, nearly 10,000 collected at Gwalior within a fortnight of the battle at Panipat—the sole survivors, it would seem, of that vast host which had gathered in the field of battle.

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*According to *Kashi Raj*, 32, the mutinous Durrani soldiery had surrounded Shuja's tent and demanded Ibrahim's head. At first not quite willing to oblige, Shuja later yielded to the Wazir's importunities. Summoned before the Shah, Ibrahim refused to recant. His wounds were then "bandaged with poisoned dressing and his diet was filled one-half with salt", so that he died shortly afterwards.

Tarikh-e-Husain Shahi, 73-4, tells us that he was executed by order of the Shah, the corpse dragged through the camp and left as food for crows and kites.

†*Bhau Saheb Bakhar*, 157, asserts that the bodies of these Maratha leaders were cremated and the "ashes sent to Benares."

‡*Kashi Raj*, 31, gives a detailed account of how Jankoji, who had taken refuge with Barkhurdar Khan, came to be beheaded, a victim to Najib's undying hatred for the Sindhias and of Shah Vali Khan's antipathy towards Barkhurdar Khan.

§The vanquished army must have been quite worn-out already—with hunger, marching and constant alarms. Thus even when the Maratha bands were larger they were in no position to offer any sustained resistance.

¶The Marathas were later to cherish the memory of this hospitable and generous treatment which was meted out to them by the Jat ruler, in their hour of adversity and defeat.

[Twenty thousand naked and penniless Marathas were provided with a blanket and t wo rupees to each of them by Surajmal. *Hayat Hafiz Rahmat Khan*, 107-8. *Editor*]

The spoils of the Victors

According to Kashi Raj an immense booty fell into the hands of the victors for, "every trooper brought away ten, or even twenty camels laden with money*". The captured horses were "beyond count" but none of them was of value, and they came "like droves of sheep in their thousands". Another account speaks of 700 elephants, 25,000 horses and a similar number of bullocks and camels all "laden with property," which fell into the Durrani's hands†. Quite obviously the spoils of the battle must have been sizeable, but were the Marathas that rich or affluent to have yielded so much?

It has been noticed already that on the eve of the battle the Maratha camp was of a half-famished soldiery, dying of hunger. There was hardly any food. Most of the troopers had not been paid for the past 10 months or so—the financial bankruptcy of Bhau's state treasury was well-known. Driven to such sore privations, the average trooper, and even more so the non-combatant, must perforce have sold and eaten away his little trinkets. Abdali himself referred to the Maratha soldiers as bare-backed, for in terms of clothing and other accoutrement, they were extremely poorly provided. Nor would the "bazar" be very rich for, on the day before the battle, the soldiers and officers alike had told Bhau that grain could not be had, "at any price". It would appear that, whatever the accumulated wealth of the merchants or the purveyors in daily necessities, most of it must have been spent in acquiring the ever-shrinking daily necessities, at inflated prices while the rest must have gone to the nearly empty state treasury, as loans. Where then was the wherewithal for those "ten or twenty" camels, laden with gold or other belongings which every trooper of the Shah brought in? Where was the booty placed on the backs of hundreds of elephants and thousands and thousands of horses and bullocks and camels? Again, a bare fortnight or so after the battle we find the mutinous Afghan soldiery complaining to the Shah that it had got practically

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**Kashi Raj*, 28.

†According to *Ahmad Shah, Baba-e-Afghan*, 278 the Marathas lost 50,000 horses, 2,00,000 bullocks and 500 elephants.

Khazanah-e-Amirah, 108-9, mentions "unlimited booty including precious stones, Tope-Khana" and "thousands of camels", apart from the horses, bullocks and elephants.

Mir Taqi Mir in his "*Mir ki Aap Biti*" 135 says:

"Durrani sipahi jo fakir mahz the, mala mal ho gae".

nothing out of this mighty victory. The Durrani, we know, had not been able even to meet the salaries of his soldiers for the past two years. They were indeed in a parlous condition,

> "The booty that had fallen into our hands was also bought by the Rohillas at a cheap price, they having given us two annas for (articles worth) a rupee. We had to sell because we were smitten with hunger. Had we won such a battle (as that of Panipat) in Iran and had we defeated any army of one lakh of men there, what enormous booty would we have had in horses, silver and gold? But in the Maratha camp every body was naked to the back, without any garments. They had shining lances and had mares each worth not more than four tumans. We will not stay in India this year*".

And all this within less than two weeks of the resounding victory over the Marathas? Where had all the gold and silver, camel-loads of them, gone? And after so short a while? It would thus seem that the accounts of the booty are highly exaggerated. The Durranis certainly captured a large number of draught animals—and horses and elephants too. But in how good a condition could they have been? And if food had been scarce in the Maratha camp, it was none too abundant in Abdali's. Probably the Afghans sold away most of these animals at nominal prices—and ate away the rest.

Surely the Durranis captured a lot many slaves. Some Maratha sardars had brought their 'harems' with them, and there must have been other women in the camp attending to household chores too. It is possible that these captives fetched some money. Contemporary accounts have talked of "rose-limbed slave girls" being captured but in terms of hard cash, they brought no more than "one tuman each". There is also a mention of 700 women in 'Palkis', a figure which may be exaggerated†.

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*_Nur-ud-din_, 56.

According to Kashi Raj, *op.cit.*, 41-2, eight days after reaching Delhi, the entire Durrani soldiery rose in rebellion (balva) against the Shah, "Two years have passed that we were brought from our land and whatever promises were made to us have not been fulfilled during eight rainy seasons. You have conquered and have now ordered a return march but we have not gained any money or rations(provisions). When we reach home our children and wives would ask us what we had brought for them."

†Nur-ud-din, quoted in Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 255-6.

Sh. Abdur Rashid's translation of Nur-ud-din's manuscript, which has been used in these pages, makes no reference either to the "rose-limbed slave girls", or the price they fetched.

Yet in terms of pieces of cannon, of lances, and spears and shields and swords—not to talk of muskets and matchlocks, the Durrani gains must have been enormous . For it was an entire army they had worsted, an army nearly as big as their own and not too poorly equipped either*.

*[For an interesting account of some aspects of this battle, vide *Ballads of the Marathas*, rendered into English verse from the Marathi originals, by Harry Arbuthnot Acworth, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1894.

The day and date of this battle is thus recorded in a Hindi verse:

"Gayarah sau chauhattar men din Budh para jo bhārā,
Sat Jamad-ul-Sani ko Shah jíta, Bhau hārā."

Hayat Hafiz Rahmat Khan, 108. *Editor*]

PART THREE

THE SEQUEL

CHAPTER XX

CAUSES OF THE MARATHA DEFEAT AT PANIPAT

The following causes contributed to the defeat of the Maratha army at Panipat on that fateful day of 14 January 1761.

The Rival Generals

Undoubtedly, Sadashivrao Bhau was a great and brave soldier who in his late twenties had won laurels against the armies of the Nizam in the Deccan. Yet while in actual charge of the Maratha forces in the north he suffered from serious handicaps. He had come to fight the Abdali not as the supreme commander of the Maratha army, but as its manager. The nominal command was vested in Vishwasrao, the young son of the Peshwa. Then he was not conversant with the affairs of northern India nor familiar with the manners of its people and climate. He was unlucky to be matched against the greatest Asian general of the age and against the most powerful combination of Indo-Afghan Muslims. Unlike Bhau, Abdali did not lead any battalion in person. Consummate general as he was, he left this task to his generals, every one of whom was a match for Bhau himself. With perfect calm and the eye of an eagle he watched the battle from a distance. He had kept in hand a strong reserve of 10,000 which he used just at the right moment and turned the scales decisively against the Marathas.

The Rival Captains

On the Abdali side there was a brilliant galaxy of officers such as Jahan Khan, Shah Pasand Khan, Atai Khan, Karimdad Khan, Najib and the Durrani Wazir, Shah Vali Khan. While Bhau himself was no match against the powerful Afghan king in generalship, he was not likely to have really capable and first-rate military captains. Malhar Holkar (now quite an old man) and Jankoji Sindhia had been defeated by the Durranis on various occasions. Jankoji and Antaji Mankeshwar were too small men as compared to the experienced Afghan officers.

The Maratha generals felt bitter jealousy for Bhau's favourite Gardi soldiers who were paid higher and more regular salaries than their own soldiery. Malhar and Ibrahim Gardi had serious differences regarding the mode of warfare—and had almost come to an exchange of hot words and blows. In the actual war Bhau kept them at a distance from each other. The Maratha officers in northern India were more anxious to gain selfish and personal ends than to serve the common interests of the Empire. The Maratha diplomatic agent at Delhi, Hingane, remained suspicious of his military colleague, Antaji Mankeshwar. Holkar and Sindhia never saw eye to eye with one another. Holkar secretly encouraged the Raja of Jodhpur in his war against Sindhia. Holkar is accused of having been in collusion with Najib and with Shah Pasand Khan on the day of the battle.

RIVAL ARMIES

Maratha Army

The Maratha army suffered from the chronic disease of feudal organization. If in early days the swift rise of the Marathas was due to their strong national army, their spectacular fall in later times can be traced to their inefficient military organisation. The national and well-disciplined army of Shivaji, working under one central organization and commanded by one supreme leader, degenerated into a number of ill-disciplined feudal forces led by mutually hostile warring chiefs. If Sambhaji impaired the discipline by permitting the war spoils to go to the army in place of the state treasury, Rajaram administered it a serious blow by the purchase of his adherents' loyalty with the award of fresh *jagirs* and creation of hereditary fiefs. Shahu went a step further. His supporter, the first Peshwa, Balaji Vishwanath, allocated to these feudal chiefs fiefs with sovereign powers in internal affairs. By the creation of these hereditary military chiefs, he rendered the unity of command ineffectual. Balaji reduced the power of Senapati to zero and attached *jagirs* to lesser commanders like Sarleskar, Sena Sahib and Sena Khaskhel in return for the maintenance of stipulated forces. The Maratha chiefs introduced widespread sub-infeudation among their own followers.

As was natural, the system suffered from serious defects. The chiefs maintained neither the stipulated number of horses and horsemen, nor those of the standard required. It was never the custom of Peshwa's soldiers to expect regular or monthly salary. At one

time Holkar did not pay the poor souls for full 60 months. Under the pressure of insufficient finances, many of the chiefs followed the method of reducing their army in peace times.

In order to perpetuate their hold on the feudal chiefs, the Peshwas resorted to the dangerous expedient of playing upon their mutual jealousies. Sardars like Sindhia and Holkar repaid them fully by exploiting the dissensions in the Peshwa's own family, and, in the face of a foreign enemy, increasing their own power.

Balajirao did yet another disservice to the Maratha cause. He completely denationalised the Maratha army. Shivaji created a Maratha army by converting a disunited race into an imperial power. Bajirao gave up the racial character of the army. He stood forth as the champion of Hinduism and was welcomed by the rulers of northern India as a deliverer from the tyrannies of Muslim fanatacism. Thus Shivaji had a purely Maratha, and Bajirao a preponderantly, Maratha army. Balajirao, however, did not permit himself to be swayed by the considerations of a Maratha or Hindu cause. His sole ambition was the acquisition of gold from north and south from Hindus and Muslims alike. For that purpose even a non-Maratha or a mixed army could be equally good. Consequently, his army consisted of mercenaries from all parts of, and even from outside, India. His personal force had a domination of Arabs and other foreigners. Pindaris formed the bulk in Holkar's, and Purbias in Sindhia's, army. Unmoved by any consideration of national interests, these mercenaries would often indulge in ruthless plunder and rapacity and bring notoriety to Maratha name.

This policy of denationalisation, added to the feudal organisation of army, brought havoc and proved disastrous.

Whereas the Afghan army fought under one supreme commander, the Maratha soldiers obeyed the orders of their own war lords, and neutralised unity of command.

Thus feudal organization contributed to the laxity of disicpline in their armies. The practice of despatching foraging parties for the plunder of food and fodder had become a rooted evil and national character of the Maratha armies. In this they did not discriminate between a friend and a foe. To Imad's protest against this unfriendly act of Maratha armies in his territory, the seasoned and responsible Malhar had made the characteristic reply: "They

are soldiers; they always do it." This Malhar had once insulted Balaji Vishwanath's son, Bajirao, when the latter tried to stop this practice at a particular place.

This laxity of discipline was bound to recoil on the Marathas when pitted against better organized and disciplined armies of the Afghans. The Maratha soldiers could always indulge in loot and plunder with perfect impunity.

Afghan Army

The army that Bhau faced at Panipat was one of the finest in Asia, led and commanded by the best Asian general of his times. The Afghan army marched under the orders of one supreme commander and scrupulously carried out his orders. Born horsemen as they were the Turks were amenable to hard training and strict discipline. They were aware of the rigid punishment of the least insubordination or indiscipline and dared not waver in their duty. It was not possible for them to indulge in plunder with impunity as in case of the Maratha soldiers. Their atrocities were never forgiven. At one time (January 29, 1757) the Shah inflicted severe punishment on a few Persian marauders in his army at Delhi. He slit their noses, "cut their stomachs, thrust arrows into their nostrils and in this manner paraded them in disgrace".* At another time (in 1760) he bored the noses of 200 of his soldiers with arrows, passed strings through the holes and sent them in this condition for suitable punishment to Shuja in whose camp they had committed some irregularities†.

It was iron discipline which accounted for the main success of his army against the indisciplined feudal hordes of the Marathas.

Camp Equippage

During Shivaji's days no woman dared accompany the Maratha army. At Panipat Bhau's camp teemed with a large number of women consisting of officers' wives, concubines and others of doubtful character.

Similarly Shivaji's armies marched without tents and camp equippage. Bhau's army at Panipat, on the other hand, was encumbered by the presence of thousands of animals meant to carry

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**Sarkar*, ii, 214.

†*Ibid.*

the heavy tents and camp equippage. Besides the feeding expenses incurred on these animals, they would become a source of infection and epidemics.

Had Bhau heeded Surajmal's advice and left his heavy equippage and all the non-combatants behind in the Jat forts, his forces at Panipat could have become completely mobile.

The Maratha army was inferior to the Abdali army not only in organization and discipline, but in numbers. Against Ahmad Shah's army of 60,000, the Marathas could muster only 45,000. The Afghan force had behind its front line 80,000 second class troops, as against 15,000 Pindaris in the rear of the Marathas.

Food Supply

The lack of food supplies was one of the major causes of the ultimate Maratha defeat at Panipat. Bhau had started experiencing difficulty with regard to finance and food from almost the very outset. He had to wait on the way for money and thus delay his arrival in the north. His capture of Delhi in August 1760, which gave him a wrong estimate of his victory and 'puffed' him up, proved a barren spectacular success as in the dry suburbs he could get neither food for his men nor fodder for the draught-oxen of guns. Moreover, his expenses increased for supporting the members of the royal household. Within a month of Delhi's occupation, men and horses were starving there and becoming lifeless. In his north Indian expedition, against his total expenses of 72 lakhs of rupees, Sadashivrao Bhau failed to get more than $22\frac{1}{2}$ lakh from all available sources. And this factor had a telling effect on the morale of his army.

During his two months' stay at Shalimar near Delhi, his army suffered from an acute shortage of food and fodder. He knew that to stay there any longer was to invite sure and severe starvation.

After December 1760, the position of food and fodder supply in the Maratha camp had become dangerously acute. Horses and camels began to die in their thousands. Life in the camp became unbearable for the soldiers. It was not to gain the laurels of victory, but just to put an end to their agony of starvation, that the hungry Maratha officers and soldiers urged Bhau to engage in a death

grapple with the fully-provisioned and clothed and thoroughly-fed Afghan troops*.

Thus it was not a strong and enthusiastic ,but a famished army on lean half-dead country mares† that on the historic field of Panipat 'met the finest cavalry in Asia mounted on thoroughbreds purchased from their breeding-grounds in Trans-Oxiana.'

Artillery

The Marathas felt so proud of their artillery that they always preferred to take with them even a useless and heavy piece driven some time with as many as 200 bullocks. There being no pioneers to build or repair roads, the clumsy and badly built gun carriages were shaken to pieces after a few days' march. They used to heap their guns with so much baggage of every kind, that it was not easily cleared for ready use. They being too large and heavy, and their level not easy to alter, at Panipat "their shots began to pass over their troops, and fell a mile in the rear‡" according to Kashiraj. Their artillery suffered yet from another defect. The ammunition supply, like the food and fodder provisions, was always far less than the actual requirement. At Panipat the shrewd Abdali let the Marathas exhaust their ammunition in useless firing, and when rendered helpless, roasted them with his swivel guns. At Panipat it was an 'unequal contest' between Bhau and Abdali as a fight between 'the eagle and the lion'. "With wings cleft and talons shorn§" the eagle had no chance against the mighty beast.

By their profuse firing 'both in actual fight and in the protective random cannodade', the Marathas had exhausted their ammunition two months before the day of battle. Being of larger calibre the Maratha gun-carriages were impossible to be dragged forward with the advancing troops and became useless for purposes of attack. Their big guns could not be moved along and became stationary.

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*While on the day of the battle the Durrani officers were clad in armour and the common soldiers in leather jackets and thick quilted coats (which coul ward off a sword cut), the Maratha officers were putting on light garments and their soldiers only dhotis.

†*Sarkar*, ii, 233.

‡*Ibid*, ii, 242.

§Sen: ***Military System fo the Marathas.***

Abdali's artillery was not only superior to that of Marathas, it was the'finest mobile artillery of that age in Asia'*,with 4,000 soldiers on camelbacks and armed with Zamburaks, besides 40 light pieces of cannon. Then his artillery was armed with flint-locks or jizails, firing heavier bullets as compared to the short-barrel guns used by the 8,000 foot-musketeers of Ibrahim Gardi. The rockets used by the Marathas did nothing more than frighten or wound the horses.

Tactical Mistakes

Prior to his march on Kunjpura, it was a criminal folly on Bhau's part to leave Naro Shankar at Delhi with a comparatively small force of second line troops of new recruits to be easily crushed by the Afghans. "No General can be pardoned for omitting to provide for his own safety in case of an unforseen defeat".

Bhau miserably failed in his duty to guard the fords and ferries. His Maratha patrol of 1,000 at the upper ferry east of Sonepat had no knowledge till the last of the movement of the enemy who crossed the Jamuna, surprised and cut them to pieces on 27 October.

On 17 October, Bhau reduced the Afghan army at Kunjpura and, six days later, without his knowledge, and without any opposition, the Afghan army crossed the Jamuna at Baghpat and cut the Maratha army from its base of operations.

Much of his tactical and strategical mistake was due to the over-confidence of Bhau who under-estimated the strength of the enemy.

His strategy at Panipat was to starve out Abdali by sending Govindpant Bundele to ravage the Rohilla territory and cut off supplies of the hostile army. But Bundele had a very inadequate force for the difficult task and was only a civilian officer too old for the job. Even after the defeat and death of the poor Bundele (December 1760), Bhau persisted in his folly of sticking to his original plan. He lived in fancied security not knowing that while the enemy had all the facilities in procuring supplies, his own army was on the verge of starvation.

His stay at Panipat after November and particularly after December meant the sure starvation of his army and was nothing short of an unpardonable and criminal folly. It meant certain

*Sarkar, ii, 237.

destruction and sure annihilation of his forces. At Panipat Bhau demonstrated a woeful lack of foresight and quick decisions, the essential qualities of a true general.

The decision of the final attack was taken not after a well calculated plan, but under the pressure of circumstances. The Maratha soldiers marched into the battlefield of Panipat not infused with a lofty ideal. The famished warriors rushed into the valley of death just to ward off the privations of hunger. Their baffled young general led his soldiers against the formidable array of the foe n ot under a well conceived plan with the sure conviction of victory. He took them to the battlefield to die the death of the brave rather than end their life by starvation.

Whatever little planning was conceived the previous night, it was abandoned next morning. Instead of directing the movements of the army like a seasoned general, Sadashivrao like an inexperienced commander, led the attack in person, without leaving behind any reserve. He hatched no plan for an orderly retreat in case of defeat as he felt that defeat not retreat was certain. Thus Bhau tried no strategy. His artillery played no important part. The contest was decided by a close hand to hand fight, and superior man-power ultimately triumphed.

The Maratha right wing commanded by Malhar remained inert during the critical stage of the battle. The only action of Holkar on the fatal day of 14 January was to stand motionless all the time, and in the end, when all was over, to flee from the battlefield.

Bhau's Muslim ally, on the other hand, stood plegded to his word of honour. Spurning the offer of Ahmad Shah Abdali to join the Muslim banner against the 'infidel' Marathas, the brave Ibrahim Gardi, along with his soldiers, died fighting by the side of his master.

The Morale of Armies

Prior to the disaster of January at Panipat the Marathas had earned a notoriety for continuous defeats at the hands of the Afghans from 1759 onwards. This fact had gone a long way to damp the spirit of their soldiery and undermine the reputation of their army.

During the siege of Sukkartal the Marathas on 15 September 1759, sustained defeat and lost 500 killed as against only 50 of Najib's men, and on 3 November Shuja's vanguard under the Gosains inflicted many casualties on them. The defeat of the Maratha

garrison in the Panjab by the Abdali forces in the same month proved an irretrievable disaster to the Maratha cause there.

It is an undeniable fact that the raising of the Sukkartal siege by Dattaji Sindhia on 8 December 1759, exposed the weakness of their strategy, besides administering a heavy blow to their prestige in northern India.

Sixteen days later the Maratha army suffered yet another loss of face near the historic plain of Taraori, when 'outnumbered, outgeneralled, outclassed in weapons', the Maratha soldiers under Bhoite fled away utterly bröken. As many as 400 of them were slaughtered by the Abdali general Sa'id Khan Qipchaq, their heads cut off and taken to Ahmad Shah. "It was the first clear defeat of the Marathas in an open engagement*".

The tragedy that overtook the Maratha arms at Barari Ghat a year before Panipat should have convinced their rulers at Poona that all was not well with their methods of warfare. The Barari Ghat disaster was a shattering blow to the Maratha prestige. The death of Dattaji, the flight of their large army, heavy slaughter of men and ruthless plunder of their baggage, could not have added to the stature of the Peshwa's army in the north.

A month after Barari Ghat the Marathas suffered yet another defeat at the hands of the ememy on 11 February 1760.

The overstay due to miscalculation of Malharrao Holkar after his complete sack of the city of Sikandarabad brought down upon him on 4 March 1760 the surprise attack of Abdali general Jahan Khan. After a short resistance Malhar, the best cavalry leader among the Marathas, fled the battlefield, his soldiers and generals following him on unsaddled horses, with many left behind as killed.

In the same month Holker again showed his back to the Abdali and preferred flight to battle.

Failure of Diplomacy

By his shortsighted and selfish policy in the north, Balajirao had alienated the sympathies of almost all the powerful elements in northern India. His crushing debts and empty coffers whetted his appetite for funds. He despatched armies to the north not to advance a Maratha or a Hindu cause, but to extort money from all and

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**Sarkar*, ii, 156.

sundry. This policy earned the Marathas the nickname of *Ghanim* in northern India. The Rajput princes entertained the hope that Balaji, like his illustrious father, would help them and avenge the wrongs done to them by the Muslim rulers. But they found, to their chagrin, that Balaji and his Sardars Holkar and Sindhia heaped more wrongs on them. The Marathas had sowed wind and reaped whirlwind. The Rajput princes and the Jat Raja could render them effective help. They on the other hand held aloof at the hour of crisis and for this the Marathas had to thank their own policy.

By a clever propaganda and clarion call to the defence of Islam Najib had succeeded in rallying the Muslims of northern India to the banner of Islam and turn the conflict into a holy war 'between Islam and infidelity'. The Marathas who in their greed of money had estranged not only the Muslim, but even the Hindu, population had no such common cause and failed to enlist the support of the Hindus. The Marathas under Bhau were not inspired by Shivaji's ideal of Hindupad Padshahi. Sadashivrao was "according to his own confession, fighting for Timuride Empire*".

It is significant to note that the Hindu rulers of northern India had become so bitterly hostile to the Marathas that they refused to make a common cause with them at Panipat against the hated tyrant from Afghanistan who only in 1757 had indulged in a general slaughter of the Hindus in Delhi and Mathura, Brindaban and Gokul. Rather they preferred to sit on the fence and regarded the Abdali Shah as their deliverer from the "locust swarm" of the south who had brought death and destruction to their fatherland.

The defection of Surajmal in August 1760 proved very ruinous to the Maratha cause. Surajmal had reasons to feel antagonistic to Marathas who had indulged in an unprovoked aggression against him and besieged his strong fort of Kumbher in 1754. Only a promise of a large tribute had softened their heart. The plan of the capture of another strong fort, Ramgarh, in May 1760 failed because of Afghan pressure. He felt that the Marathas had toned down towards him only because of the formidable Muslim opposition, and after the withdrawal of the Abdali, would come down upon him and demand the balance of old dues. As a realist and shrewd man of politics, he thought it proper to keep aloof from the Marathas.

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*Sen, *The Military System of the Marathas.*

As early as January 1760 Abdali, after the Maratha rout at Barari Ghat, had sent off letters to Surajmal Jat and the Rajput rulers to pay tribute and present themselves. If "only his promise of safety could be relied upon, every one of the Rajas would galdly wait upon him", writes a contemporary Hindu authority. Such was the detestation of the Hindu rulers for the Marathas.

Thus instead of rendering help to the Marathas in 1761, the Rajputs and the Jats derived a secret pleasure from the presence of Abdali as it proved a deterrent to the Maratha raids on their states.

If the Marathas had succeeded in winning over Shuja against Abdali, their success might have become possible. Shuja had the strongest army and by far the best artillery in northern India. Despite the advice of his mother and officers, he chose to side not with the Marathas, but with their enemies. The reason was not far to seek.

The Maratha ambitions in the north had become fully unmasked since 1757. Shuja could never forget the fact that they had greedy eyes on his most lucrative cities, Ayodhya, Banaras and Allahabad. Their design of annexing Bihar had become public in 1759 and from there Banaras was easy to conquer. Their victory over Abdali was sure to revive their urge for these cities. If he had any hesitation to join Abdali, Najib was there to remove it by an appeal to his religious instincts.

To enlist the reluctant and ease-loving Shuja on behalf of Abdali, in the teeth of opposition from his mother and old officers, was the 'most splendid diplomatic success†' of Najib.

The greatest defeat of Maratha diplomacy in the north was their estrangement with Najib who proved their chief enemy and the sole instrument of their defeat at Barari Ghat and Panipat. It was a crowning folly of Dattaji Sindhia to undo the policy of Malhar Holkar who regarded Najib as his son. He estranged Najib and by his hustling tactics rushed headlong into a serious conflict with him. If Dattaji considered him as a thorn in flesh, Najib took Dattaji to be his sworn enemy. He proved successful in first entrapping him at Sukkartal for about six months and then bringing about his ruin at Barari Ghat. It was just to save himself from the terrible fury of Maratha vengeance that he invited the Afghan King and urged him to stay on till the final disaster at Panipat.

As against the powerful Najib, the Marathas befriended a useless coward, Imad. His atrocious murder of the impotent Emperor

Alamgir II on 29 November 1759 could be easily exploited by the enemies of Marathas, who were supporting the cause of Imad. His friendship proved of no avail to the Marathas as he was incapabl of rendering them any help.

Lack of Statesmanship

In their dealings with north Indian politics the Poona Government demonstrated a woeful lack of realism and statesmanship.

There were many occasions when, instead of rushing headlong in the face of catastrophe, the Marathas could have come to terms with their rivals. They rejected Najib's offer of conciliation in June 1759 and precipitated the most useless and disastrous warfare with him*.

At Sukkartal they spurned the peace offers of Shuja in the same year.

Prior to the arrival of Bhau in the north they rejected the peace terms of Abdali who sent Hafiz Rahmat Khan for this purpose in May 1760. It was always the exhorbitant demand for money which caused the failure of peace missions.

After the capture of Delhi in August 1760, Shuja sent a letter and an envoy for peace proposal between Marathas and Durranis. This caused the defection of Surajmal and Imad who both left for the Ballabgarh camp without taking leave from Bhau.

Before the capture of Delhi by Marathas, an honourable and durable peace with Abdali by cession of Panjab to him and confirmation of Najib in the Doab, was quite possible. But the Peshwa who was far away from the scene and not in a position to understand the realities, brushed this aside. The Peshwa left Durrani no choice but a fight to the finish.

The capture of Delhi where he had to encounter only a small force of the Abdali, gave him a misguided conception of the condition of the Afghans. Throughout August and September 1760 Shuja and Najib held peace parleys with him. But how could Bhau come to terms with an enemy who seemed to him to have lost all morale and was anxious to retreat?

After the defeat of the Abdali's agent and annexation of the Panjab, Raghunath is said to have received a letter from the Shah of Persia for an alliance against the common enemy*. Raghunath

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*Sen: *The Military System of the Marathas.*

however underestimated the strength of the enemy, took the proposal lightly and lost a golden opportunity of crushing the dangerous foe with the help of such a powerful ally.

Inadequate Defence

It was always a great mistake to leave in Hindustan an inadequate force. The Peshwa turned a deaf ear to the request in 1751 of Bapuji Mahadev Hingane for the necessity of a strong force at Delhi. Four years later Govindpant Ballal strongly urged upon the Peshwa to station a well-disciplined and non-plundering army of 20,000 in northern India. But all this was in vain.

In 1755 when Raghunath left Hindustan for Poona with Holkar, he left only a small force with Antaji Mankeshwar to look after the Maratha interests in northern India. It gave Abdali yet another chance to come to India, to put the small Maratha force to flight and occupy Delhi.

It was a grave blunder on the part of the Peshwa to sanction the provocatively advanced frontier in the Panjab without keeping there a permanent and well-equipped large force. Nor he thought it wise to keep there a first-rate Maratha captain as his brother or cousin or a secondary general like Holkar or Sindhia as a Warden of the North-western marches. And Raghunath left a heavy task for the Sindhia. He was required to look after an extensive region from Lahore to Multan. He was moreover required to lead expeditions into Bengal to raise funds for the Peshwa. The result of such a policy was disastrous. At the approach of Abdali, the Maratha forces posted in Panjab failed to offer resistance and their governor Sabaji Sindhia abandoned Lahore and fled to the siege camp at Sukkartal. At one stroke the work of Dattaji Sindhia was undone in the Panjab. Moreover, this administered a fatal blow to Maratha power in Panjab and did serious harm to Maratha prestige in India*.

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*[See also *supra*, 148-50 151-3, 157-64. *Editor*]

CHAPTER XXI

CONSEQUENCES OF THE BATTLE

Well might have Ahmad Shah exclaimed after his rout of the Marathas at Panipat on 14 January 1761, like Pyrrhus, "Another such victory and we are lost". The Durrani gained the victory at so great a cost that he returned to his highlands early in March 1761*, leaving the dismantled provinces of the moribund Mughal Empire to be appropriated by the various powers that were now contending for ascendancy in India. His successors kept their hold upon the frontier districts of the Panjab and upon Kashmir; until early in the nineteenth century the erstwhile invincible Afghans were finally driven into their mountain defiles by Ranjit Singh.

The Marathas Fought in a Glorious Cause

The Marathas at Panipat fought in a glorious cause. They were the only power that faced the might and main of the Afghan hordes at all hazards, *pro patria,* while the other powers in India stood aside, without lending a hand in resisting the Afghan onslaught. Thus the main brunt of the battle at Panipat, to check further Afghan inroads, was borne by the valiant Marathas. We may cite in this connection Major Evans Bell: "Even the battle of Panipat was a triumph and a glory for the Marathas. They fought in the cause of India for the Indians, while the great Muhammedan princes of Delhi, of Oudh and the Deccan stood aside intriguing and trimming: and though the Marathas were defeated, the victorious Afghans retired and never again interfered with the affairs of India†" Professor H.G. Rawlinson observes in the same strain:

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*According to Kashiraj Pandit, Ahmad Shah left Panipat five days after his victory and, entered Shahjahanabad (Delhi Fort) after four marches. He "wished to seize the empire of Hindustan" but his ambition was baulked, by the mutiny of his soldiers eight days after reaching Delhi. They got, according to the Pandit, completely out of control and demanded immediate return to their country. [*Ahwal-i-Jang-i-Bhau wa Durrani*, Khalsa College Amritsar Library. Mss. 41-2.]

†Quoted in *Sardesai*, ii, 125-6.

"Even at this distance of time, the pulses leap as we read of the Abdali, reflecting at his *hookah* as he watches the long lines of the Marathas deploying for action in the dim winter dawn; the Vazir, in full armour rallying his men with the cry, "Our country is far off, my friends; whither do you fly?", the choking dust, the combatants rolling on the ground, locked in a deadly embrace; the cries of 'Din Din'! and 'Har, Har Mahadev'! and lastly, the dramatic annihilation of one of the most splendid and gallant armies that ever took the field. A defeat is, under the circumstances, as honourable as a victory; and never in all the annals did the Maratha armies cover themselves with greater glory than when the flower of the chivalry of the Deccan perished on the stricken field of Panipat, fighting against the enemies of their creed and country*".

The Carnage at Panipat

In the Armageddon, the Marathas were undoubtedly badly battered. Thousands of them were put to the sword or retained as slaves by the brutal Afghans. There was hardly a home in the whole of Maharashtra that had not lost at least a member in the sanguinary engagement at Panipat. The gruesome tragedy, naturally enough, plunged the Maratha nation into grief and mourning. The nation was definitely the poorer for having lost, apart from countless combatants and non-combatants, the Peshwa Balajirao, who died heart broken on 23 June 1761, his eldest son (Vishwasrao), his Achitophel (Sadashivrao Bhau), his able lieutenants, Jaswantrao Pawar, Tukoji Sindhia and Ibrahim Gardi—a galaxy of notable persons. To have lost all of them and a host of lesser but very distinguished patriots besides, at one stroke, was a tragedy of the first magnitude to the Maratha nation which was thus denuded of its picked men all of a sudden. These terrible losses in man-power and leadership were paralleled by a decline in the political and military reputation of the Marathas. The halo of invincibility which they had hitherto built around themselves vanished. Their militarism stood discredited. They themselves were driven headlong into the Deccan.

The carnage at Panipat was devastating, the aftermath ominous and melancholy. The Marathas now faced a dismal and uncertain future. It appeared as if all was lost and it was all up with the nation.

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*An Account of the Last Battle of Panipat (1926), pp. xii-xiii.

Phoenix-like Rise of the Marathas

The Marathas recouped these losses earlier than it could be expected, and came into their own Phoenix-like. In 1769, the Marathas recrossed the Narbada under Visaji Kishan accompanied by Sindhia and Holkar, and after exacting tribute from the Rajput princes, the Rohillas and the Jats, they came surging triumphantly and tumultuously once again to occupy Delhi in 1771.

By these exploits the Marathas resuscitated their political and military reputation which had become tarnished at Panipat. Their set-back at Panipat, therefore, was ephemeral; it did not prove fatal to the solidarity of the Maratha confederacy. By no means did the Panipat debacle mean *actum est de republica**.

Within ten years of their discomfiture at Panipat, the Marathas had become incontestably the most important power in India. They now offered to restore the effete descendant of the house of Timur to his lawful throne in Delhi†, and make his imperial title a reality.

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*The view here expressed in respect of the effects of the Panipat disaster on the vicissitudes of the Maratha fortunes is in line with that of Sardesai, the renowned Maratha historian who bases his thesis on a close study of contemporary records. According to him: "Notwithstanding the terrible losses in man power suffered on that field by the Marathas, the disaster decided nothing. In fact it pushed forward in the distant sequel two prominent members of the dominant race, Nana Phadnis and Mahadji Sindia, both miraculously escaping death on that fatal day, who resuscitated that power to its former glory. Not long after the battle of Panipat the Maratha power began to prosper again as before and continued to do so for forty years, until the death of Madadji Sindia or until British supremacy was established early in the 19th century.....The disaster of Panipat was indeed like a natural visitation destroying life, but leading to no decisive political consequences. To maintain that the disaster at Panipat put an end to the dreams of the supremacy cherished by the Marathas, is to misunderstand the situation as recorded in contemporary documents". ("*New History of the Marathas* (1948) p. 454.)

Jadunath Sarkar, however, does not see eye to eye with Sardesai in his contention that Panipat did not materially affect the Maratha fortunes. The former dismisses this view by saying, "A dispassionate survey of Indian history will show how unfounded "this chauvinistic claim is" *Fall of the Mughal Empire,* ii (1950), p. 260.

It is time that a final judgement was pronounced on this contentious question. The present writer is inclined to toe the Sardesai line.

†It was on 10 October 1760, that Sadashivrao Bhau had deposed Shah Jahan II and proclaimed Shah Alam II as Emperor of India. But since then Shah Alam was reduced to lead the life of a roving adventurer, seeking his fortune as a fugitive.

Shah Alam II taken under protection

Shah Alam II, the derelict Emperor, had been living at Allahabad from 1765 to 1771 under the protection of the English Government which was now established in Bengal. Tempted by the prospect of returning to Delhi, the ancient capital of the Empire, he quitted Allahabad and rode into the imperial city for the first time as sovereign on 6 January 1772*, placing himself in the hands of the Marathas. This step he took against the implorations of the English, who were now estranged from him, and he never received their protection again. For the next thirty-one years he was no more than a puppet in the hands of the Marathas, until 1803 when Lord Lake defeated them and drove them out of Agra and Delhi.

Futile as were the pretensions of the Emperor to the rule of India, Warren Hastings at that time had not shrunk from describing him as that "wretched king of shreds and patches"—his residence in Delhi under the tutelage of the Marathas was not wholly valueless to them. They could at least boast of "fulfilling to the letter the written undertaking of 1752 and indirectly also the grand ideal of *Hindupad Padshahi* (a pan-Hindu ideal) for which the Peshwas had been striving from the beginning of their regime"†. The Mughal Emperor was now merely a pageant of the Marathas' own creation. In Delhi for the next generation he held his court (under the wings of the Marathas), a mere phantom of extinct sovereignty, sitting crowned upon the debris of a magnificent empire reared and fostered by Babar and his immediate successors.

The Real Importance of Panipat

The real importance of the battle of Panipat, however, lies in a different direction.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, two strong powers, namely, the Marathas and the Afghans, were contending for supremacy in India, and for some time (1750 to 1761) it was quite an open question which power would reach its goal. At that time only the first glow of a third power, namely, the English, was discernible in the Indian political horizon. Ahmad Shah's invasions resulted in the rout of the Marathas and in inflicting blows to the tottering edifice of the Mughal Empire which it was

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*Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 408.

†Sardesai, G. S., *Main Currents of Maratha History* (1949), 125.

ill-equipped to sustain. The Mughal Empire, in consequence, became a broken wreck with a swarm of plunderers quarrelling over its fragments. As a Greek proverb says: "When the Oak falls, every man gathers wood", so the prostrate empire was stripped by spoilers on every side. Panipat, for all intents and purposes, sounded the death-knell of the Mughal Empire. As it was, the destruction of the Maratha power did nothing to weld together the various states into which the Empire had been broken, or to restore the power and authority of the Emperor.

The Durrani himself, harassed by a tedious and exhausting campaign lasting for a year and a half, and faced with a mutinous spirit in his army, resolutely turned his back to the Indian plains, and, in the words of Cicero in *In Catilinam*, II, i, 1. "*aliit, excessit, evasit, erupit*", without gaining any advantage in the material sense*.

Thus in the struggles culminating in Panipat, the Marathas and the Muslims mutually disabled each other to the great advantage of the English who thenceforth came rapidly to the foremost place in Indian politics. It was a clear case of *tertius gaudens*. The future events leading to the speedy extension and consolidation of the English power in India bore ample testimony to this contention.

The political stars of the English were now in the ascendant. They had already freed themselves, in the words of Dr. Gerson da Cunha in *Origin of Bombay*, "from the thraldom of insidious neighbours" in the years following up to Panipat by digging their toes in, and driving roots securely in the soil of India. After Panipat, the path to dominion lay open before them.

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*Ahmad Shah's victory at Panipat, no doubt, resulted in the retreat of the Marathas from the Panjab, but the Afghans could not either keep their control over that province. After the Durrani's last invasion in 1766-67, the Sikhs, who had been driven into mountain defiles after Banda's execution in 1716, re-emerged to share the spoils of the dying Mughal Empire, and settled down in different areas on both sides of the Satluj in groups or formations known as the Misls. The different Misls, composed largely of sturdy militant and unruly elements lost no time in embarking on a career of internecine strife for gaining supremacy of one over the other. This, in turn, inevitably led to the emergence of a leader of extraordinary ability among them—Ranjit Singh of the Sukarchakia Misl—who succeeded by the end of the century in reducing them all to his own control and building up a strong and extensive kingdom. In the beginning of the nineteenth century he finally pushed the Afghans into their highlands thus reversing the tide of conquest from east to west—a thing so far unknown in Indian History.

The Three Memorable Days

On the fateful 14 January 1761, when the Marathas and Afghans were engaged in a macabre contest on the stricken field of Panipat, Shah Alam II, the Mughal Emperor, was making war-like preparations in league with the French for an invasion of Bengal to recover it from the clutches of the *Farangies*, without realising that he was courting disaster. On 15 January he launched his attack and was defeated by the English forces led by Major Carnac on the river Son. Shah Alam's French officers were taken prisoners and he threw himself at the mercy of the English. On 16 January Pondicherry the chief French settlement in India, was reduced after eight months of blockade, and Lally consequently surrendered unconditionally to the English, which was tantamount to saying that the French power in India was at an end.

These dramatic events taking place in such quick succession, nay, on consecutive days in different parts of India, were fraught with momentous consequences, and were the prelude to the permanent establishment of the English power in this country.

The Deposition of Mir Qasim

At the time when the Peshwa Madhorao was settling his score with the Nizam, the English deliberately provoked a conflict with Mir Qasim, the Nawab of Bengal who was proving his worth as a genuine patriot and an able ruler and ultimately deposed him in July 1763. His administration marked the finale of Muslim rule in Bengal. By deposing him the English knocked the last nail into the coffin of the Muslim government in Bengal and the adjoining provinces.

At Buxar on 23 October 1764, the English could easily overpower the combined forces of Mir Qasim, Shuja-ud-daulah (the Nawab Wazir of Avadh) and Shah Alam as the Durrani failed to retain his hold over northern India and the Marathas were at that time lying low temporarily, licking their wounds inflicted at Panipat.

Buxar was the most important victory in India won by the English as it laid Avadh and a large part of northern India at their feet. After Buxar, if they so wished, they could conquer all Hindustan in the name of the Mughal. But from these dazzling dreams the gnostic Clive turned away his eyes—he was perhaps building better when he deliberately stayed his hands, and confined the territorial influence of the Company to the three provinces of Bengal,

Bihar and Orissa, knowing full well that the Marathas would be on their feet again in no time and the Company would not be able to withstand the Maratha onset if it flung its nets too wide and thereby dissipated its forces*. Be it as it may, the fact remains that at Buxar, because of the eclipse of the Muslim power and the temporary set-back of the Marathas, the English made a short shrift of the coalition of the Muslim princes.

The Grant of the Diwani

In the following year, that is just four years after Panipat, Clive's acquisition of the Diwani marked the first important step in the assumption of sovereignty of Bengal and subsequently of the whole India by the future lords on our country's destiny. One feels certain that had the Marathas been victorious at Panipat, or had the Mughal Emperor been self-righting and not sunk into the depths of despair and obscurity, or had Ahmad Shah retained his hold over northern India, the English could not have grasped the glittering prize so easily and consequently the consolidation of the English power would have been for less easy of accomplishment.

Panipat—a turning point in Indian History

In other words, the catastrophe at Panipat set the English on the highroad to acquire a sure and well-grounded dominion in India. From that point of view, the battle of Panipat did veritalbly prove a turning point in the history of India.

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*The same consideration weighed with the English when they signed a treaty with Shuja-ud-daulah on 16 August 1765, reinstating him to Avadh which was henceforth to serve as a bulwark against the threatening power of the Marathas.

[S. Moinul Haq in his article entitled "Ahmadshah, 'Alamgir II, and Shah 'Alam" published in Pakistan's *History of the Freedom Movement* on p. 123, writes that if the Marathas had "not been routed at Panipat the Mughul Empire would have died almost a century earlier. Equally true is the fact that although weak and degenerate as a pilitical machine it was a source of great moral support to the Muslims and its end would have caused irreparable loss to their political, social, cultural and economic life." *Editor*]

[After the battle of Panipat Najib-ud-daulah became the dictator of Delhi. But he could not revive the power and prestige of the Mughal Empire. The Sikhs rose in the Panjab and stood between Najib and his master, Ahmad Shah Durrani. Najib publicly admitted his defeat before the whole nation in arms. South of Delhi Surajmal Jat remained the most powerful ruler. He occupied Agra and the Mewat territory. He lost his life in fighting against Najib. Surajmal's son Jawahir Singh besieged Delhi, and reduced Najib to sore straits. Pressed between these two powers Najib begged Shah Alam at Allahabad to take charge of his capital, confessing his inability to meet the challenge from the Sikhs and the Jats, and retired from Delhi. *Editor*]

CHAPTER XXII

HAD THE MARATHAS WON !

It is unusual to include such a chapter as this in a sober work on history. Scholars of history might ask—"Why speculate over situations which were strangled in the womb of time"? But history is the record of human operations for or against the "might-have beens". The present chapter is only an attempt to emphasise the stakes in the Abdali-Maratha contest which enemies feared and friends hoped for. Even that cautious historian, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, speculated on what might have followed a Maratha triumph*.

There is a further purpose in pursuing such a line of study. The downright fact that we were defeated at Panipat should not deny us the right to assess our net loss and to proclaim what we would have done in victory.

Not that an age of gold and sunshine would have burst forth from that stricken field to hail the successful piercing of the way to the Yamuna or that the Hindu freedom movements in the Panjab, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and the Jat country would have coalesced in a Grand Alliance against the foreign or the domiciled enemy, or that the Rohillas or Avadh would have ceased to tax the ingenuity of statesmanship or that the English would immediately have been driven into the sea. But one fact is sure—the history of India would have been written in some other words.

Maratha defeat not inevitable

Basing his conclusion on the temporary lapses of military strategy and equipment Sarkar has held that Maratha defeat at Panipat was inevitable†. This opinion directly cuts across our basic assumption that a Maratha victory was possible. The assertion of inevitability may be invincible in the face of actual history but was Abdali's

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**Sarkar*, ii, 183, 196, 260-1.

†*Ibid*, 267.

victory really inevitable? Or was the battle itself inevitable? Even the Abdali's stay in India beyond March 1760 was not inevitable. It was at Najib's entreaties backed by cash and hospitality that he was prevailed upon to endure the heat and the rains*. With Abdali gone and Bhau upon him, Najib would have found his Panipat allies ranged on the opposite side minus the Abdali but plus Suraj-mal, Alha Singh, Imad and probably also the Rajput Princes.

And was Abdali so very invincible? He, no doubt, won the battle but did he win the war? Success covers many sins. Abdali's victories in India have made him the hero of many an Indian historian, just as the failure of the Peshwa has brought upon his head the wrath of infuriated patriotism†. After all Abdali was defeated and defeated by the Hindus. It is on record that even a fortnight after the greatest success of his life his army potential was so un-dependable and his diplomatic structure so shaky as to oblige him to beat a hasty retreat from Delhi. His position in his own dominions was never beyond challenge from rivals or rebels. Right from the day of the election in 1747 his military despotism had several times been put to a severe test. Rebellions, military repulses, assassinations, plots, mutinies, and the intrigues of disgruntled rivals had success-fully thwarted the path of his ambitions or threatened his throne‡.

And what treasured resources enabled him to successfully shatter the Maratha dreams of supremacy in the North ? The wretched resources of the Afghan monarchy unaided by Indian loot or Indian allies would have failed him as they failed his Barakzai successors against the Lion of the Panjab. His successful career in the years 1759–61 was achieved with the help of his Indo-Muslim allies who contributed all the urgency, most of the money and above half the troops that fought at Panipat§. It was Najib's diplomacy that won over Shuja to his side. It was Najib's infantry that virtually decided the day for him.

**Sardesai*, ii, 418; *Sarkar*, ii, 164, 194.

†See *Sarkar*, ii, 207-15 in praise of Ahmad Shah. S. Ganda Singh's biography of this invder reads like a court chronicle. Ragarding the condemnation of the Marathas, see *Shejwalkar*, 118, 122-3.

‡For Abdali's weaknesses see *Ganda Singh*, 25, 30-31, 33, 34, 36, 71, 81, 89-91, 92, 128, 134, 260, 261, 263-4 and 268.

§*Shejwalkar*, 116. *Sarkar*, ii, 195 and his estimate of the rival forces.

The Marathas would have set up an Indian Empire

Except for a passing phase in the course of Maratha historiography, Panipat has been accepted on all hands as an unmitigated tragedy for the Marath empire*. The wages of defeat, however, did not lie only in the death of Maratha generals and diplomats or even in the effacement of Maratha influence this side of the Chambal. Panipat influenced our history in more fundamental aspects. It arrested the very development of Indian history in an Indian way. Had the Marathas won at the battle the way would have been cleared for the establishment of an *Indian Empire* in India.

There may not have been much to glorify in the Maratha methods of Empire-building. Since the last forty years, Malwa, Bundelkhand, Rajasthan, Panjab, Bengal, Orissa and wherever the receding fabric of the Mughal Empire had permitted the entry of Maratha lances, the people, Hindus or Muslims, had been overwhelmed by one egalitarian tantacle of aggressive perfidy and greed. Races and religions had been rolled into one exploited mass without the exploiter waiting to think whether his victim was a past tyrant or a future ally. Those who could afford to come as liberators from half a millenium of tyranny, came as harbingers of a new oppression, more accursed because brought by brothers from across the Narbada. The community of ideals, of religion, of sacred places and even of war cries, was forgotten in the blindness of rapacity and ambition. The Maratha State had to pay through the nose for this betrayal of the ideals of its inspired founder. It was a lonely Sadashiv that fought at Panipat.

But much of the Maratha "mischief in the North" may be excused as the natural accompaniment of a period of transition characterised by struggle. The decline of the Mughal Empire created a void in the Imperial polity of India which many people and races rushed in to fill. For half a century the bitter struggle for supremacy was fought. By 1759 the successors of Shivaji had humbled nearly all the great capitals and their upstart dynasties. The rise of the Maratha power had scorched the ambitions of the Nizam, the Rohillas, the Mughal Wazirs and the rulers of Avadh, Rajasthan and Bengal. The Abdali had been pushed out of most of his recent Indian acquisitions and the Maratha horse had encamped on India's north-western borderlands. Just as Maratha expansion had thwarted,

*Sarkar, ii, 260-1; *Shejwalkar*, v, xv, xvi, xviii, 112, 113.

so was the Maratha contraction to broaden the ambitions and aggressions of a host of contestants. But for the debacle of Panipat all princes and powers situated on all points of the compass from the field of battle would have been swayed over to a different destiny.

No contemporary power in India except the Peshwa could have founded an Indian state. Such a consummation was beyond the resources of Najib, Shuja or even the Nizam. The Padshahat of the Durrani would have registered the fact of foreign conquest as was the supremacy achieved by the British. The Marathas alone of all the struggling powers at the time possessed the moral, the spiritual and the territorial potential to become the national sovereign power of India*. Their national character would not have been worse than that of Akbar but far better than that of Aurangzeb. Panipat, however, destroyed this possibility.

Mutual adjustment without foreign interference

The claim of some scholars that the Marathas were fighting for the ideal of "India for Indians" must be conceded in the face of irrefutable historical evidence though some of it is indirect†. Whether as agents of the Mughal Empire or as instruments of a higher destiny, it had fallen to the Maratha rulers to marshall their mightiest resources to oust the foreigner from this sacred land. Others there were who, under the inspiration of political Islam, not only invited the foreigner but also made him the main prop of their religious and political aggression against India. There, again, were the Hindu forces working for the regeneration of the motherland in various parts of the country of whom the Marathas had emerged as the most successful. For these national forces, Panipat was not a mere battle, it was an episode of the spirit‡. Had the victory come to Maratha arms not only the waves of invasion would have been rolled back, even the war of liberation which began with Shivaji would have attained its glorious culmination. With foreign help thrown beyond its reach the claims and terrors of politically aggressive Islam would have been sobered, thereby forcing the Najibs and the Nizams of India to seek out an Indian adjustment with their Hindu neighbours thus placing Indian politics in its insular setting.

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*For something approaching the view presented here see *Shejwalkar*, 125.

†*Shejwalkar* xv, 6, 121 and 123. But also see 106-7 for a discordant note.

‡See, for instance, the fine sentiments expressed in *SPD*, xxvii, 251.

Influence on the Afghans

Thrice had the history of our country been decided at Panipat and always it was the Indian side that had lost the field. All the three times the Afghans were present there* as active participants, losing two out of the three battles. Had they lost this third battle too, namely that of 1761, the lessons which were reserved to be taught them by Jassa Singh and Ranjit Singh would have been taught them earlier and with more telling effect because in 1761 both the foreign and the domiciled Afghans would have been cut to size and no Muslim power in India, north or south, would have gone unharmed.

By a Maratha victory at Panipat the Abdali would have been deprived of at least half his fighting resources in any future contest against the Maratha power, because the Abdali's Indian allies would have thought twice before daring to invite him again or to join him in any unsolicited aggression against India.

In the light of later history the year 1759 proved to have seen the climax of Maratha territorial expansion. But a Maratha victory at Panipat would have immediately redressed the military and political losses suffered by the Marathas at Sukkartal, Barari and Sikandrabad.

An Abdali defeat would have at once dissolved the "Muslim league†" against the Marathas, forced Ahmad Shah to retreat beyond the Jehlam immediately, thrown Najib, the Par-Rohillas, Shuja and the Emperor at the mercy of the Peshwa who had a definite policy ready for each one of them. The compulsion of debts and the higher mission of liberating the holy places was urging the Maratha State to a wider territorial aggrandisement‡.

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*Even Hemchandra Vikramaditya's defeat at Panipat in 1556 was the defeat of the Afghan cause in more ways than Sadowa was a French defeat.

†*Sarkar*, ii, 185.

‡The Peshwa's repeated exhortations to his officers to help liquidate his debts by conquering more territories and extorting tributes, has undeservedly earned for Maratha polity , a notoriety for immoral aggressions and financial extortions. It has been forgotten, probably, that the history of Turkish, Afghan, Mughal and British expansions in India can also be translated in terms of search for cash and suzerainty. The inner meaning of Maratha expansion, however, is different. We have no right to ignore the real mission of the Maratha State which has been so often clearly expressed in the same exhortations as well as in the letters of Maratha officers in the North, namely, the suppression of extra-territorial loyalties, expulsion of the foreigner and the liberation of the holy places.

Effect on Shuja and Najib

Once this Abdali affair was settled the Maratha forces were under orders to march ahead to the realization of certain items of imperial policy. Had the Bhau emerged successful from Panipat, within a few years, Kashi, Prayag and Ayodhya would have been emancipated*, Bihar would have been conquered or partitioned†, Najib would have been suppressed‡, the Nawabat of Shuja would have become a Maratha wet-nurse, enlarged by the possible partition of Bihar, weakened by the cession of the holy places, but rewarded with the grant of wazirship of the empire§. Bangash and the Par-Rohillas would have been mulcted in money and befriended in alliance at the cost of Najib's territories¶.

Effect on the English

And what about the English in Bengal? This province was present prominently in the calculations of the Maratha rulers. The "work in the East" filled much of the Peshwa's thinking on the situation‖. Sarkar believed that the English would certainly have paid *chauth* for Bengal≠. Shejwalkar asserts that the way of the rise of the English power would have been closed by a Maratha victory at Panipat℘. A direct connection between Panipat and the rise of British power has been established by many writers. The collapse of a great Indian power was bound to brighten the chances of another power enjoying the resources of a great nation. If these two historical phenomena stand in a relation of cause and effect, it stands to reason that a contrary cause would have led to a contrary effect. Even if the English had continued to maintain their progress for some years in Bengal, a time would have come, as a time did come, when these two Powers would stand face to face. Then Warren Hastings, and Wellesley would not have found a Maratha State, shattered by the consequences of Panipat, weakened and transformed into a Confederacy, with Raghunathrao and his son, the beneficiaries of

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*SPD., xxvii, 242, 247, 251; *Sarkar*, ii, 165, 166, 196, 260-1.
†*SPD.*, xxvii, 231, 239, *Sarkar*, ii, 166, 196, 260-1.
‡*Sarkar*, ii, 166, 260-1.
§*Ibid.*, 165, 166, 196, 197.
¶*Ibid.*, 260-1.
‖*SPD.*, xxvii, 231, 236, 239, 242; *Sarkar*, ii, 166.
≠*Sarkar*, ii, 261.
℘*Shejwalkar*, 127.

Panipat, there to betray the fort, but a strong Peshwa ready to lead its forces on to a united assault. If even the contrary pulls of a shattered Maratha political fabric could make it withstand the British onslaught for forty years after the Panipat disaster, a victorious state would have written either a glorious chapter by expelling another foreigner or gone down only after a more prolonged and bitter struggle than was actually vouchsafed to the puny victims of the subsidiary system.

Effect on the Panjab

Ahmad Shah's defeat would have hastened the consummation of the war of liberation—proceeding at high flood in the Panjab. The forces of the Dal Khalsa would have wrought havoc upon the retreating Afghans and pushed them beyond the Attock in the course of a few years*. It is doubtful if the Maratha forces could or would have successfully regained their lost territories in the Panjab†. Alha Singh, however, might have benefited from Maratha friendship.

Surajmal

Surajmal too would have gained by the elimination of the Rohilla obstruction though at the cost of becoming a Maratha tributary.

The Rajputs

The Rajputs would have been probably the worst sufferers among the Hindu rulers. Maratha supremacy over Rajasthan would have been hastened and accelerated. The chief ruling houses would have been punished for their policy of neutrality in the recent war.

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*[It is doubtful whether in case of a Maratha victory Ahmad Shah Durrani would have returned home safely. If he had escaped the Maratha fury, the Sikhs would not have spared him. Destruction of the Durrani, his commander-in-chief Jahan Khan, his chief of skirmishers Shah Pasand Khan, and many of his troops was sure if he had followed the old beaten track via Lahore, Jehlam, Attock and Peshawar. They could have avoided the Sikhs by following the Panipat, Rohtak, Hissar, Fazilka, Bahawalpur, Shikarpur and Bolan Pass route. Najib must have paid with his life in spite of Malhar's pleadings and support. *Editor*]

†[Most probably the Satluj would have formed the northern limit of the Maratha Empire. *Editor*]

CHAPTER XXIII

A VISIT TO PANIPAT AND BAGHPAT

After months of long range military and political activity, the rival armies at last came face to face at Panipat at the end of October 1760. The city and its environs for kilometres around were now in the grip of war conditions till the battle was fought out and its impact transferred from the battlefield to the page of history. For two hundred years the name of Panipat has aroused feelings of deep agony mixed with awe in the hearts of numerous Maratha visitors to that field of sacrifice and slaughter. "Panipat" has almost become a synonym for "retreat" and "rout", just as "Waterloo" now signifies a decisive defeat for France. A Maratha friend of the present writer who was on a visit to the Panjab and in whose itinerary Panipat and Kala Am were the last places, remarked with pain that perhaps it was in the fate of all Marathas to have to "run away" from Panipat.

Numerous historical investigators have visited the city and the battlefield to collect new bits of information to make their picture more complete. Two centuries have rolled by over that level plain, almost eight generations have come and gone but the names of Sadashivrao Bhau, Parbatibai and Ahmad Shah Abdali continue to be household words with the people of those villages.

Just two hundred years after the arrival of the Maratha armies at Panipat, the present writer undertook a journey to Panipat on 25 October, to the surrounding plains and to Gauripur and Baghpat to collect local information and topographical data. It is hoped that information brought together here might in some measure help the future worker in his task.

From Karnal to Panipat

Starting from Karnal it is 40 minutes' run by bus to Panipat. There are numerous *Kos Minars* in this region which mark the path of the old *Shah Rah*, at least four of them standing along the present Grand Trunk Road from Karnal to Panipat.

The old bridge over the Shah Nahr near which the Maratha forces encamped for the night on their return march from Kunjpura, forms a part of the G.T. Road. It has four pillars in the *Kos Minar* style, two on each side and is now called the Mughal Bridge.

The G.T. Road crosses the old bed of the Shah Nahr again about six kilometres from Panipat. The bed is now a drain for rain water. Ghraunda where the Bhau kept 700 of his elephants, is almost midway between Karnal and Panipat.

The City of Panipat

On nearing the city of Panipat, the tomb of Ibrahim Lodhi and the famous Devi temple can be seen on the left.

The city is situated on a mound . The old fort now houses the municipal offices.

Both sides of the G.T. Road, as it runs through Panipat, are crowded with bus stands, industrial units, workshops, tea-shops and markets. The city proper is to the east of the Road, the Railway Station and the Model Town to the west. Chandani Bagh forms the south-eastern corner of the city proper beyond which lies the field of battle. The general impression one gathers of the city is that of dirt, filth and old ruins. The old mosques, Imam Baras and Idgahs are gradually falling into ruins, though some have been kept in a state of repair by Hindu devotees of Muslim saints. The old Devi temple had no approach road worth the name till the present Governor urged the necessity of it upon the local municipal authorities. The ancient monument of Buali Qalandar is taken proper care of by the Panjab Government.

Panipat is an ancient town, as ancient as the Mahabharata War. In the age of Muslim supremacy it became the home of important Sufi saints, Muslim scholars, theologians and Mughal stipendiaries. It is said that it has as many mosques and Muslim shrines as there are the days in a year. Its Muslim scholars and reciters of the Quran used to bask in the sunshine of Mughal patronage. When the holocaust of 1947 forced the Muslims of Panipat to abandon their home of centuries, thousands of books and manuscripts were either carried away to the safety of Pakistan or abandoned to the fury of the mob to be burnt or used as wrapping paper in the bazars. Some manuscripts found their way to Aligarh. Till the inter-Dominion exchange of population, Panipat was a Muslim-majority area. Its present Muslim population, however, consists of three families,

hundreds of others being migratory labourers from the neighbouring Saharanpur and Meerut districts of Uttar Pradesh.

In the politics of the days before the Partition, the Panipat Muslims cared little to conceal their communal ambitions, though the scholarly and temperate character of some of them is still remembered with esteem in the city. The present writer was told an interesting anecdote. Some days before the disaster of forced migration befell the Panipat Muslims in 1947, a Muslim saint told his coreligionists that he was expecting a stern divine reckoning for their butchery of helpless Maratha soldiers in the city after the battle and he announced his determination to stay wherever the rest might go. When after a few weeks the Muslims started on their way to Pakistan the saint was forcibly carried along but he managed to escape to Uttar Pradesh.

Devi temple at Panipat which has a large tank adjoining it, is an old structure in its original constituent temples. The main shrine is that of Mansa Devi which according to the priest, Pt. Shyam Lal is a centre of Vaishnava worship. All the various shrines in the temple are within a walled courtyard. The courtyard has an ancient banyan tree.

To the east of the Mansa Devi shrine is the Shiva temple, originally a Maratha construction, as is proved by its Marathi-Persian inscription. It was built by one Mangalrao Raghunath son of Ramchandrapant in Hijri 1180 (1765 A.D.) *i.e.* barely four years after the battle.

To the north of the Shiva temple is a temple dedicated to Hanuman and immediately to the east of it is another shrine which has an inscription. According to Master Sita Ram it was this inscription which was seen and read by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. The priest had forgotten its existence till Shri Sita Ram pointed out the place where it lay buried under thick layers of lime coatings. It was cleaned but could not be read, not even the Persian part of it. Sir Jadunath has mentioned one Mahipat son of Visaji Krishna having built a Shiva temple at Panipat in 1772 A.D. If his information is based on this inscription, he seems to have missed the other inscription on the temple near by which gives an earlier date of the return of Marathas to Panipat, *i.e.* 1765, or he must have read some third inscription which is not known to the persons connected with the temple. In any case, these two inscriptions have to be read before their significance can be assessed. At any rate the politics

of this region, so hot for the Marathas soon after the battle, had calmed down sufficiently to enable a Maratha to come here four years later, and construct a temple in peace. There must have been something more in this temple or in its founder than meets the eye, to let the temple take a place in the affections of the city. Otherwise that petty low structure would not have gathered more and more shrines, walls, residential rooms and gardens with the march of time. The inscription in the Ramchandra temple has also to be read. Below are attached the various pieces of information gathered from the people of Panipat and Ugra Kheri.

Chaudhari Maheshwari Das, Cloth Merchant, aged above sixty, Panipat:

The tank of the Devi temple was constructed by his ancestor Seth Mathura Das "*Kothiforda*", at a cost of Rs. 160,000. The dedication ceremony of the tank was performed on the same day as that of the Jama Masjid at Delhi.

The Maratha forces came from the side of the present Tahsil building (on the G. T. Road towards Karnal) and stayed in the courtyard of the grain parchers (Bharbhunjon ka Katehra). Bhau's wife, Parbatibai entered the city on an elephant, sword in hand, and encamped in the Qalandar Chauk.

The Abdali converted the Shahdpur temple and another temple near Chah Chaura into mosques.

Master Sita Ram, superintendent octroi, Panipat:

He was formerly general knowledge teacher in Jain High School. He wos the person whom Sarkar and Qanungo met in December 1936, when they came to make local inquiries about the battlefield. At his request Pt. Khushi Ram took Qanungo to Kala Am site and Chaudhari Mahnge Ram copied the fragment of the Bhau Ballad.

The wall surrounding the Devi Temple tank was constructed by another family called "Muchal". The *Jogi* who sang the ballad lived at Ugra Kheri. He was not blind. Aged about 80 at that time, he died many years ago.

The night after Bhau arrived at Panipat, a great storm blew and the terrified elephants ran amuck.

There are only three Muslim families here who originally belong to Panipat, namely, the families of Maulvi Laqaullah, Hafiz Abdul Hamid and another Hafiz who is an attendant of Maulvi Laqaullah.

Shri Jai Bhagwan Advocate of Panipat:

He confirmed the tradition hat the Imam Bara situated near the Goshala Bagh along the Grand Trunk Road was formerly a Hindu temple. He very kindly took me to an old relation of his, L. Gainda Mal, aged 95. The latter was in bed with fever but hearing of the purpose of my visit, gave some interesting traditions.

L. Gainda Mal of Panipat, aged 95:

The Bhau encamped on the rising ground near the Goshala, adj oining the Rahwali custom chauki.

The Kabuli Bagh mosque was constructed by Ahmad Shah Abdali. Gold was hidden in its walls.

He also corroborated the Bhau's leaving the elephant for the horse and the consequent defeat.

The Bhau ballad was composed by a *Jogi* named Fakira. His father's name was Nigahia. The blind *Jogi* (probably the one mentioned by Shejwalkar as "the blind *Jogi* of Siwa" lived at Jundla. The Maratha camp spread from the Goshala to the Chandani Bagh.

Six months after the battle some Afghans came from their country, traced the gold hidden in the walls of the Kabuli Bagh mosque with the help of the site plans they had brought with them, and carried it away.

While the Marathas were encamped here, the shopkeepers earned bumper profits, so much so, that the profits appeared like loot, whence grew the prevailing proverb of Panipat—*Bhau ki loot*, *i.e.* as huge profits as were earned when the Bhau was here.

The amount of a petty shopkeepers' goods was depicted by L. Gainda Mal in a picturesque proverb* which means that a cloth merchant's goods could be packed in one load, the potter had his vessels in one basket while the apothecary's herbs could be packed in one small pot.

Shopkeepers did not possess goods worth above a hundred rupees. But during the months of the Maratha encampment, people set up bigger shops out of their sudden and inflated profits.

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*गठड़ी के अन्दर बजाजा था ।
टोकरे के अन्दर कसेरट थी।
हंडिया के अन्दर पंसारट थी ।

The conditions before this were illustrated by another story. The victim of a theft reported the matter to the authorities. On being asked to furnish details of his loss he recited the following couplet which shows how little the people kept in their shops*.

The profits earned by shopkeepers of Panipat appear to be a fact because they were then monopolising the custom of a vast military camp. The buying rush is very interestingly corroborated in the Bhau Bakhar†. When the Maratha soldiers were paid their salaries on the night before the battle, they rushed to the bazar to make purchases. Those who could get food stuffs purchased food stuffs. Others purchased sweets. Those who could not get even sweets. purchased sugar, cocoanut and dried dates. Nothing was left in the shops.

The same must have happened on previous pay days too. In the light of this statement we might have to revise our estimate of the starving condition of the Maratha camp.

Shri Sohan Lal, Secretary, Arya Samaj, Panipat:

This gentleman told me that the temple of Shri Ramchandra was built by a Maratha named Jayajirao. The whole neighbourhood of the temple was inhabited by the Marathas settled at Panipat. There is an underground passage under the temple which was closed by the orders of a sub-inspector of Police about 50 years ago, who was nicknamed "*gitta thanedar*" because of his small size.

The house of Lala Shadi Ram father of Shri Deshbandhu Gupta, late editor of the "*Tej*", Delhi, is situated next to the temple and has been sold off only about a month back. L. Shadi Ram used to say that a non-stop *Yajnya* was performed for a fortnight at the dedication ceremony of this temple.

On the morning after the battle a Jat of Siwah named Godu Ram or Sadhu Ram, found a bag of gold coins lying in his field.

Many years ago a heavy rain caused a crack in the soil. From inside the crack a person found a golden *dumchi*, a tail ornament for a nobleman's horse.

The Secretary too related the story of certain Afghans carrying away treasure from the Kabuli Bagh mosque. Their site plans

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*गई हस्त चंगाढ़, गई कागज़ की डलिया।
पुड़ी पेच सारा गया, गई मल्हम की कुल्हिया ॥

†*Bhau Bakhar*, 143.

were inscribed on copper plates. But he placed the incident about half a century ago.

The massacre of Hindus after the battle enveloped the local residents too. Many escaped to the villages. No Hindu was left in Panipat. Many years later the Panchayats of some villages decided to return to the town sacred to the memory of the Pandavas. The present Hindu inhabitants have all settled here from the neighbouring villages for less than 200 years. Shri Sohan Lal's ancestors came from village Nagla, this side of the Jamuna.

The old Mughal canal flowed through village Khukrana about $6\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres west of Panipat.

Pt. Anup Chand, the priest of Rama temple:

He told me that while he was a young man the copper plates and other papers concerning the temple were handed over to the son-in-law of Lokmanya Tilak who wrote an article on the temple in some magazine.

The marble sculpture of a human figure in the temple is that of the founder of the temple. The fact that the founder was a Maratha is confirmed by the Maratha turban placed on the marble head. The priest told me that although the style of the garments was occasionally changed, the turban was always tied in the Maratha style.

I was also told that in the middle of the porch over the pedestal in the sanctuary there is an inscription but at present covered up by the decorative wood-work on the porch.

Chaudhari Sri Chand of Ugra Kheri:

This venerable gentleman, aged 88, gave me certain facts which he himself had got from his father.

A Muslim traitor in the Maratha army persuaded the Bhau to come down from the elephant and ride a horse. The Bhau came down asking who had killed Vishwasrao*. As soon as Bhau descended from the elephant, the traitor went up, pulled down the Bhagwa flag. Finding the flag gone, the army fled. This seems to be a faint confirmation of the treasonable rumours started by the Afghan mercenaries recruited by the Bhau.

He also confirmed the valour of Parbatibai saying she fought here for two months.

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*हाथी ते कूवया भाऊ एम्रो नीला मंगवाया ।
जल्दी दो बताय किन बिस्वासरा मरवाया ।।

The Shepherd (the word is " मलार ", a strange confusion for Malharrao Holkar) kept one-third of the army idle. Bhau taunted him saying, "After all you behaved like a shepherd", *i.e.* like a mean, low-caste person.

Sri Chand asserted that Bhau was killed within the bounds of Ugra Kheri. When Bau's mother heard of the tragedy, she mourned in her sleepless nights, for her son killed at the field of Panipat*.

Even now after a heavy shower bones are seen in the fields. Once a human skeleton was found while digging for a well. About thirty years ago an Englishman carried away some cannon balls from the village. After that once again a heavy cannon ball was found in a field.

Chaudhari Sri Chand also quoted a versified dialogue between the Bhau and Qutab Shah after the latter was captured at Kunjpura†.

The Bhau taunted Qutab Shah that although reputed to be a brave man he could not make a stand for an hour. Qutab Shah replied, "How can a river drain off an ocean. I have faced bravely the onslaught of your three lakhs and thirty-three thousand troops. You let me go even now and I shall give you another shock."

Shri Keshav Chandra Sen, Panipat:

This gentleman retired in 1958 after having served as a teacher, headmaster and college professor in various institutions.

He told me that on arrival at Panipat the Maratha forces encamped to the south of the Goshala. His aunt used to say that Bhau's wife, Parbatibai killed many Muslim soldiers. The Muslim *Jogis* used to sing of her exploits too.

The Maratha forces were welcomed by the people of Siwah and Samalkha.

Visit to the Battlefield

Nearly half a kilometre south of the city, the road for Bhapauli departs with a sharp turning towards the east from the G. T. Road.

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*तारे गिणदयां कटे रैण कद होय सवेरा ।
पानीपत के खेत मे भाऊ कट गया मेरा ।।

†भाऊ–बड़ा मर्द था कुतबशाह इक घड़ी न अटका ।
कुतबशाह–सागर से दरयाय ने क्या सोखे मटका ।
तेरी तीन लाख तेतीस हज़ार का इक ओटया झटका ।
इबके और छोड़ दे दिखाय दूं फटका ।।

Bhapauli is 13 kilometres from Panipat. Just south of the city, the Bhapauli raod cuts through the southern part of the ancient mound on which Panipat stands . The separated part of the mound reveals layers of old bricks. The top of it is a cemetry. Chandani Bagh, a dirty outskirt of the city lies along the road. Going $2\frac{3}{5}$ kilometres on the Bhapauli road you leave it for Kala Am which is to the north of this road at a distance of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres. The track to Kala Am is extremely dusty for about half the distance where you have to drag your bicycle along. Thereafter, the passage is through the fields where some cleaning seems to have been done to facilitate the Governor's visit last year. The exact situation of the Kala Am is hidden by the tall sugar cane which grows all around till one suddenly comes upon it after parting the thick growth for many metres. The surrounding fields belong to Ram Lal of Panipat. The site is marked by a brick pillar with an iron rod at the top and the whole structure is surrounded by an iron fence. The pillar bears an inscription in English and Urdu. The English version reads:—

"This pillar marks the site of the black mango tree near which was fought the 3rd Battle of Panipat between Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Maratha Confederacy in 1761". The word "confederacy" was amusing, the Urdu rendering "*jatha*" even more so. The inscription needs an inspiring revision and more than a lonely pillar is required to commemorate an event of so sentimental a significance as this battle against the invader. The approach to it should be made more passable. This is the least that free India can do to commemorate the memory of those who fought and died for us.

The black mango tree probably withered away sometime in the last century but the name persists. It is supposed to be the site where Bhau fell but this does not seem to be probable. The spot entered the memory of the people probably because some severe fighting took place here or some other prominent incident of the battle happened at this place. It is definite, however, that Bhau was in command in this segment of the battle. It is to the north of Ugra Kheri.

Coming back to the Bhapauli road you just cross it for the village of Ugra Kheri half a kilometre to the south. It seems to be a prosperous village with *pacca* houses, wide facade and a fine village centre.

A view of of the Kala Amb site where Bhau fought and fell

Another view of the Kala Amb site

At the time of the battle it was situated just along the Bhapauli road. The elders of the village told me that one day during the period of the Sikh misls, a Sikh soldier caught sight of a fine horse belonging to a resident of Ugra Kheri and demanded it. On the villager's declining to part with it, the soldier and his companions decided to set fire to the village. Fortunately for the villagers, one of these companions belonged to Ugra Kheri. He warned the headman of the impending danger, advising him to remove all living beings from the village. At night the soldiers came and burnt the village. A new Ugra Kheri grew up half a kilometre to the south.

Ugra Kheri and its fields to the north were the site of the severest contest.

Near the dusty track to Raja Kheri, which also departs from the Bhapauli road (near the Kala Am track) there are, according to tradition, twelve old wells. One of these wells, an abandoned one, bears an inscription in Persian, about one foot square, ascribing its construction to one Chaudhari Muhammad Wajal in Hijri 1147, (1734 A.D.) during the reign of Emperor Muhammad Shah. This is known as the Rangharwala well. A nearby well too has an inscription which could not be read being too far down in the well.

All the dense forest growth of two centuries ago has disappeared. There are now wide cultivated fields, tube wells, electric transmission poles and scattered groups of trees which mark the sites of villages or shady groves. The soil is dusty and sandy; one pair of bullocks being enough to throw up a cloud. Here a few distances may be noted. Raja Kheri is 4 kilometres from Ugra Kheri. The Rangharwala well is about 4/5 of a kilometre from the same village. Nimbdi is 6 kilometres from Panipat and above 3 kilometres from Kala Am. Siwah is about 11 kilometres from Chhajpur Khurd.

Visit to Baghpat and Gauripur

The Durrani crossed the Jamuna between 25 and 27 of October 1760. Just on one of these days two hundred years later, 25 October, to be exact, the Jamuna at Baghpat was a pale shadow of what we read of its fury when the forces of the Afghan monarchy united with its Indo-Muslim allies, crossed over to give battle to the armies of Indian resistance.

Starting from Panipat by the 7-20 A.M. bus, with a ticket for Bhalgarh via Sonepat, I reached Bhalgarh at 8-30 A.M.

Baghpat is 13 kilometres by road from Bhalgarh. Kheora village is about 3 kilometres from Bhalgarh, the road to Baghpat passing through it. The road is metalled only for about 7 kilometres. Starting on a bicycle at 9-15 A.M. from Bhalgarh, I reached Jhundpur Ghat opposite Baghpat at 10 A.M. and crossed the Jamuna by a large boat at 10-20 A.M.

From Jhundpur Ghat, Baghpat and Old Baghpat are to be seen towards the east and Gauripur to the north-east across the Jamuna.

The river bed is very broad, above 3/4 of a kilometre of sand spreading between the banks. The stream itself is about 20 metres broad at this time of the year. There is one island which breaks the stream somewhat above the crossing point. The boat crosses the united stream. The island is covered with *jhau* which the people of the nearby villages do not allow to grow tall, cutting it for making baskets. The island is about half a kilometre in length. The boatman, Aziz-ud-din by name, proudly called himself "*nakhuda*", and seemed to remember some Persian couplets by heart. His boat was large enough to seat forty persons.

After crossing the main stream, one has to walk on foot over the river bed. About 200 metres away is a minor streamlet ankle deep. Looking at the bed from the Baghpat side it is a vast stretch of sand and sand dunes, with here and there some cattle nibbling along the banks.

Both the new and the old Baghpats are situated at a considerable height from the bank. It would really have been a deep and a broad Jamuna in those olden times here at Baghpat, when the canals had not drained away its content. At high flood it would have been a vast roaring sea of water. No army could have crossed at Baghpat in October. Entering Baghpat, there is a temple on the left and an Idgah on the right hand side. The path ascends from the bank. The police chauki was formerly a dharamshala attached to the temple. Old Baghpat is towards the south of new Baghpat.

For Gauripur one has to go by the Saharanpur road. Just near the third mile stone from Baghpat, a village track leaves on the left near a well. Gauripur is about three kilometres from the main road. It is a small cluster of houses built along a ravine declining towards the river bank. The stream of the Jamuna flows along the village, thereby mercifully solving water supply problem for these

A view of Jhandjun Ghat opposite Baghpat on the Jamuna

A view of the route from Baghpat to Gauripur

poor hard pressed people. None remembered having heard of the Abdali crossing. There was an appeal for pity in their eyes. Their milk was good and hot. Some of them were thinking of shifting closer to the main road.

Other villages along the bank are, Ninana, Naithara up stream and Niwara down stream from Gauripur. The Abdali army must have crossed from the frontage presented by these four villages. From here the villages on the opposite side are Barauli, Gadaka, Bagh, Jajal and Jhundpur. The Abdali army must have descended upon these villages on its way to Sonepat. Between these villages the river takes a long bend which begins from near Ninana and ends near Baghpat. The life of the people is being rapidly influenced by the economic changes going on all around. It is proposed to construct a temporary bridge over the river at Jhundpur for the winter months. The people make their purchases at Baghpat carrying their poultry and pigs over the river to the market. I saw a caravan of wandering tribes crossing over to the Panjab, and people bringing kerosene and cloth from Baghpat. On my return from Gauripur, I found two pigs with legs tied with ropes, waiting for a tonga from Baghpat to carry them from the river bank to the slaughter house in the city. The sight seemed to be a usual one for the people there, because the piteous growls of the poor pigs went unnoticed.

The Bhau Legend

The legend that Bhau was never killed in the battle but lived in the guise of a *Sadhu* till his natural death, has persisted for two hundred years. One version of that legend is given below as gathered by Professor Bhala Ram Malik of C.R.A. College, Sonepat.

There is a story related even now by the people of village Sanghi, about 16 kilometres from Gohana. It is said that the Bhau finding his armies defeated started towards Gohana. Taking shelter among the villagers on his way in the guise of a *Sadhu*, he went south of Gohana. Acute scarcity of fodder had prevailed in the region that winter. The villagers had cut down even the branches of trees to feed their cattle. In the course of his wanderings, Sadashivrao reached Sanghi and was astonished to find the branches of the *pipal* trees of this village still uncut and green. He concluded that here the people must be devoted to religion and sanctity as to have spared the sacred *pipal* tree. In fact the trees had been spared at the orders of the

chief of Hooda who was the *jagirdar* of Sanghi. Bhau decided to remain among such religious-minded people.

Soon the people came to know his real identity and they began honouring him the more for that. They built a house for him on the outskirts of the village and set apart 75 *bighas* of land for his maintenance. Bhau stayed there because he would not go to the Deccan after his disastrous defeat and the death of his chief generals and large number of women. He preferred the life of a mendicant to becoming a commander again.

After some years Malharrao Holkar laid siege to the village for realising land revenue. The people offered resistance. Sadashivrao Bhau who was present at the siege, did not bear arms himself but advised the people in the conduct of operations. Malhar having been baulked in his attempt, placed cows in front of his troops and marched for attack. The people were in a fix, but the Bhau told them that it was not against *Dharma* to inflict wounds even on cows in war. The people took the advice and Malhar had to withdraw and raise the siege.

When Bhau died, after a few years, the people built a *Samadhi* where he was cremated*.

[The whole country was devastated by the opposing hordes, and the inhabitants fled, in so much that the people say that besides the town, only the three villages of Phurlak, Daha and Bala were inhabited at the time of the actual battle." *Gazetteer of the Karnal District*, 1883-84, Lahore, 1884, p. 32.—*Editor*]

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MARATHA SETTLERS IN THE PANJAB —A STUDY

Introduction

What follows is a brief attempt at recording some oral traditions relating to the Third Battle of Panipat and the confused dispersal of the remnant of the Maratha army in the neighbouring areas after it. The information contained in this essay is based on a tour of such towns and villages as were known to contain some leading Maratha families and is claimed to be neither complete nor self- consistent; it is based on that prolific and often authentic source of Indian history—tradition. Among the illiterate population tradition is strong and the communal memory often amazingly accurate. This essay is, therefore, at its best, a description of another source material, at its worst, an interesting account which throws a casual ray of light on a remote period.

A large number of persons were interviewed and a fairly large number of places visited. The collected information is reproduced almost in its entirety here. The field work was done almost entirely by Shri Radha Krishan Sharma of village Mullanpur Gharibdas, and the material collected was added to by the work of Rao Uttam Singh of Sangrur and Shri Kuldip Khanna, Research Scholar in the "Panipat Project". My role has limited itself to putting it together and presenting it.

The names of persons in the footnotes indicate people who supplied the information in the interviews.

Settlements

Rose, in his *Glossary*,* basing his information on the Census Reports of Ibbetson and Maclagan of the years 1883-1892, speaks of Marathas in the Panjab as "a group of Brahmans, a relic of

*Rose, *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Panjab* and N.W.F.P., iii, p. 48.

the Maratha supremacy, still found in the Bawal Nizamat of Nabha". He adds, "the Brahmans first settled in this tract in the Maratha service and now regarded *Parohitai* as degrading. There are also a few in Charkhi and Dadri in Jind territory and in the town of Rewari, but they are mainly found in Gwalior*".

This information is again reproudced in its entirety in the Phulkian States Gazetteer†.

The Maratha settlers in the Panjab, after Panipat were, however, more numerous and spread over a vast tract of land. They sought immediate refuge wherever security offered itself and later migrated to more suitable places when the wave of blood had rolled back.

The Maratha families in the Panjab are mostly restricted to the southern and south-eastern portion of the State, including the Haryana tract, and some areas formerly in princely States like Jind and Nabha. The information collected has come from Sangrur, Kaithal (80 families), Asandh, Birchpur (40 families), Karnal, Panipat, Shahabad, Hat (9 families), Kheora, Morthal, Pinana, Sargthal (2 families), Sikandarpur Majra (500 Maratha Brahmans), Kheri, Dadri, Rohtak, etc. Other places where traces of Maratha settlement are said to exist, include Hansi‡, Narwana§ (90 families) Bhiwani¶, Phurlak‖ (2 families), Rathal≠ (near Rohtak, 15 families,), Girawar@ (off Kharainti Railway Station), Karsola@ (Jind State, 50 families), Julana Mandi@ 10 families), Pai@ (near Kharkhauda), Moi@ (near Majra, 6 families), Brahmandas (near Julana), Dob$ (15 families), Manduthi℔ (near Asoda, 20 families), Chhatera Basana℔ (5 kilometres from Mandalana on Gohana-Panipat Road), Jhamri℔ (17 kilometres from Dadri), Salehdas℔ (approachable by bus from Rohtak), Thana℔ (on Rohtak-Kotli Road, 150 families), Kanunda℔, Kolasi℔, Landraon℔, etc.—7 villages in Delhi Jawanti

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**Idem.*

†*Panjab States Gazetteers*, Vol. xvii A, Phulkian States, 1904, p. 348.

‡Information given by Rao Uttam Singh, Sangrur.

§Shri Narain Datt, Sangrur.

¶Rao Uttam Singh, Sangrur.

‖Shri Hari Chand Brahman of Asandh.

≠Pandit Nathu Ram of Hat.

@*Ibid.*

$Shri Harphul Singh, Sarpanch, Sikandarpur Majra.

℔*Ibid.*

near Bahadurgarh*, Bhotana* (8 kilometres from Gohana), and Mondka* (now in Delhi State).

Among the descendants of the Maratha soldiers in the Panjab, are some belonging to *Vatsa gotra* or the *Vachhas gotra* and others to the *Chitpavan Gotra* which is said to be the *gotra* of the Peshwas of Maharashtra. There is a *sati* monument of the *Vachhas* Maratha Brahmans in Kaithal, which is worshipped by men of the *gotra* who come from long distances for offering *jat*† (worship) or for the purpose of *sukh* (promise to make an offering to the deity in return for a boon asked‡).

Shri Narain Datt, advocate of Sangrur, belongs to the Bhardwaj *gotra* of the Gaur Brahmans§.

A distinguished ancestor of the *Vatsa* family was a Maratha general Keshavrao Vachhas by name¶. He had accompanied the Maratha army in 1758. There are many stories current about this general who fought along with Raghunathrao and Bhau. His army was routed in the battle and the only two survivors of his family were a 15 years old son and the wife of his eleder brother. Keshavrao escaped with this remnant to a place called Takan, where his son died immediately before his approaching marriage. The *samadh* of the boy is still worshipped as an ancestral shrine. Keshavrao had now to found a family and this was done through his marriage with a bride from the Pawar Rajputs. These Pawars were the object of manhunt by the Durrani army and were on the run after the battle. Once 300 daughters of the family were captured by the Durranis. The Pawars in their hour of despair looked about for a general and found it in Keshavrao who was without an army. Keshavrao attacked that contingent of the Durranis and saved the Rajput maidens. He was married to one of them and even in his old age fathered five sons and two daughters by the blessing of his elder sister-in-law who at the time of her self-immolation threw seven coconuts from her funeral pyre towards him. The five that

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**Ibid.*

†Pandit Purshotam Das Shastri, Kaithal (interviewed).

‡Shri Harphul Singh, Shri Badlu Ram, Shri Gokal Chand and others of Majra.

§Shri Narain Datt, Sangrur.

¶Shri Sagar Datt, Rohtak.

contained fruit obviously symbolised the sons, the two that did not the daughters.

A scion of this family was Hira Singh who fought for the British with distinction in the 1857 uprising*. A *katora* of quicksilver, weighing $2\frac{1}{2}$ kilograms used by Subedar Major Hira Singh is in possession of Shri Raghubir Parshad, Pleader of Dadri. Water taken from this bowl is said to be a specific for all the ailments of pregnant women†.

Rao Uttam Singh from Sangrur has sent some more information about one Keshavdas Pardhan, who is probably the same as the ancestor of the Vachhas family of Rohtak. He writes to say that Keshavdas was stationed at Kot Putli at the head of some Maratha force under orders of the Peshwa's general to arrange for supply and watch and intimate adverse enemy movements. After the Panipat disaster, Keshavdas with his cousin, Bhajan, settled at Dadri. That he was a man of position is borne out by the records of the *Pandas* of Garh Mukteshwar‡, on the Ganga which tell of an elephant and other articles donated to them by his descendants. They are said to be *Adi-Gaur*, and *Vatsa* by *gotra*§.

Shri Janardan Datt Sharma, Deputy Secretary to the Government of Panjab, Chandigarh, also belongs to a Maratha family of Shahabad and traces his descent from an ancestor, Balirao, who is said to have settled in Panjab *circa* 1700 A.D. at Kaithal. This information, we are told, is based on the records of the *Pandas* of Garh Mukteshwar and Hardwar||. It was Balirao's grandson, Dhani Dhar, according to the genealogical table, who fought in the battle of Panipat. This family along with other Maratha families, appears to have settled first at Kaithal. The migration from Kaithal to Shahabad, where the family now lives, is said to have taken place about the middle of the nineteenth century. At Shahabad even now there are 40 to 50 families of Maratha Brahmans. Some of the ancestors of this branch settled at Yara village, near Shahabad. They are all Gaur Brahmans, and thus claim to be of the highest Brahman *gotra* except for the superior Shuklas¶.

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*Pandit Sagar Datt, Rohtak.

†Shri Raghubir Parshad, Pleader, Dadri.

‡A place of pilgrimage situated on the western bank of the Ganga in Meerut District where a grand fair is held every year in the beginning of December.

§Rao Uttam Singh, Sangrur.

||Shri J.D. Sharma, Chandigarh.

¶Shri Raghunandan Lal, Shahabad.

Shri Sharma informs that in Shahabad in days of old there were only three classes of persons, Gaur Brahmans, Banias, and Pathans. The Banias looked to the first mentioned for protection against the Pathans and got it in ample measure *.

There is a tradtion in the area that a large number of Marathas had settled in the Panjab before the battle of Panipat. Some of them belonged to the vast Maratha force which was invited by Adina Beg to help him against the Afghans in 1758. The Maratha ascendancy in the Panjab was therefore cause enough for some Maratha settlements in this part of the Panjab from its proximity to the securer centre of Maratha power in Delhi and southward.

The Marathas are also said to have extended their sway in the Panjab to the districts of Rohtak and Meerut, etc†. The women of those areas are still said to frighten their children to sleep by telling them "*Hau Aya, Hau Aya*", '*Hau*' in this case, perhaps means Bhau.

The Marathas of Kaithal relate a tradition according to which the Sikh Sardars of Kaithal used to offer *Chauth* to the Marathas‡. The Marathas once besieged the town of Kaithal on the Sikhs' refusal to make the payment in time. After that a large number of Marathas settled in Kaithal. Kaithal does indeed appear to have been once a centre of Maratha power in this area and in the town itself names of squares of spots are still named after the Marathas, *e.g.* Maratha Ghati, Maratha Chauk, Chhatar Mohalla, etc.§ At a distance of about half a kilometre from the town is a *sati* monument worshipped by the Panjab Marathas. In the town itself is a temple known locally as the Maratha *Mandir* which has a Hindi inscription on a small tablet of red stone. This temple, the Maratha Mohallas, and the *pacca* houses of some Maratha families are said to be the grateful tokens raised by the Rani of Kaithal, in recognition of the services rendered by some local Marathas, who restored to her, her property robbed by some thieves after a daring pursuit‖.

Another evidence of the continued stay of Maratha Brahmans is afforded by a parchment in possession of Pandit Sarda Ram of Mohalla Suraj Kund, Kaithal¶. This is in Nagri character and

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*Shri J.D. Sharma, Chandigarh.

†An old woman aged 85 years, Kheora. Name not supplied.

‡Pandit Jagan Nath Maratha, Kaithal.

§Pandit Purshotam Das, Pandit Ganesh Das Shastri, Kaithal.

‖Pandit Ganesh Das Shastri, Kaithal.

¶Pandit Sarda Ram, Mohalla Suraj Kund, Kaithal.

contains a long list of Kaithal Brahmans who received charity after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, *Sambat* 1896, Bhadarpad, Badi 7 (1839 A.D.) The document mentions the grant of one rupee per Brahman along with one *yagyopavit* (sacred thread) and among recipients of it were a hundred families of Maratha Brahmans of Kaithal the names of which occur under the main heading "*Thok Marathas*".

One family of Kaithal believes that their ancestors belonged to Belgaum in Maharashtra and were "soldiers by profession". They moved to the Panjab circa 1760 A.D. along with their wives and children, and settled in Kaithal after the battle due to the hazard of a long journey homeward through hostile territory*.

A family of Panipat Marathas gives out that their ancestors came from Maharashtra for the battle of Panipat, settled first at Kaithal after the battle and then moved to their present place†. The proof of their original settlement in Kaithal is cited as the *sati* monument of that place. Another Maratha Brahman family now resides at Hansi. Of its early history very little is known. More than a century ago, however, Sham Singh and Ram Singh, father and son, entered the service of the British East India Company and both rose to Risaldarship. Sham Singh was honoured in 1839 by the presentation of a manuscript copy, signed by Col. Skinner, of the Rules and Regulations of the Skinner Horse, which is now with Rao Uttam Singh of Sangrur‡.

Shri Sagar Datt writes to inform that Maratha families also exist at Sangrur and Nabha, at village Ablowal near Patiala where a family *sati* can be seen. There is a family group at Julana in Jind Tahsil where a whole village of Maratha Brahmans, by name Brahmandas exists. In village Dator of Rohtak District is a family of the Marathas again§.

Yet another family describes its ancestors as "commanders by profession" in the Maratha army and as having come to the Panjab in the period of Maratha supremacy before the battle of Panipat‖. After the battle, they escaped to Dadari, from there to Kaithal

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*Pandit Purshotam Das, Kaithal.

†Pandit Bishambar Datt Garma, Panipat.

‡Rao Uttam Singh, Sangrur.

§Pandit Sagar Datt, Rohtak.

‖Sarvshri Harphul Singh, Sita Ram, Jagta Ram and Shiv Ram of Sikandarpur Majra.

forced by inadequacy of livelihood; from Kaithal along with some Gujar tribes to Majra which was then uninhabited. The depredation of the surrounding Muslim population obliged them to move once again from there, and this time the place chosen was village Moi, where they founded a new settlement.

Pandit Raghunandan Lal of Shahabad says that the Marathas of the place came to the Panjab in the wake of their supremacy in this area. His remote ancestors settled here nearly 250 years ago. They settled first at Dadri, moved from Dadri to Kaithal and ultimately adopted Shahabad as their permanent abode*.

A fort at Mohndargarh is also said to have been built by the Marathas. The outer walls and some of the inner apartments made of stone and brick are still standing†.

Testimony exists in the town of Panipat itself to the Maratha settlement in that area having occurred much earlier than the battle. The Temple of *Bhagwan Shankar* in the vicinity of the Devi Mandir Panipat has a tablet with the inscription which is mostly illegible but does contain the words, "Maratha Ram Chander.....". Another temple called the *Shiv Mandir* in the same locality has a bilingual inscription in Marathi and Persian. The Persian portion of it is partly legible and contains the names "Mangalrao, Raghunath *vald* Ram Chander Pant, *Bina Kard*, 1180 H "built by Mangalrao and Raghunath sons of Ramchandra Pant in 1766 A.D." Local memory‡ is alive with the tradition that Sadashivrao Bhau used to make the temple of Bhagwan Shankar, his headquarter for issuing secret instructions to his chiefs. If this is to be believed the temple can safely be dated further back than the year of the battle. Two other temples in the same enclosure are *Nilkanth Ka Mandir* and *Devi Ka Mandir*.

In Par Mohalla Panipat is yet another temple known as *Maratha Mandir* and this contains the idols of Ram and Sita and a small image in standing posture and in Maratha costume of Jiwajirao, said to have been the builder of this temple. Stories are current which relate this temple intimately to the conduct of the campaign by the Marathas§.

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*Shri Raghunandan Lal, Shahabad.

†Rao Uttam Singh, Sangrur.

‡Pandit Sham Lal Priest, Panipat.

§The Priestess, Maratha Mandir, Panipat.

Local imagination, as it is wont to do, surrounds this temple with mysterious cellars and subterranean passages which contained Maratha treasures and arsenals or helped some Maratha generals to escape.

The Battle

The strength of the Maratha army under Bhau in the battle is measured in a colourful phrase which says, "Where the Maratha army passed, wells filled up with dust*." The entire Maratha army, however, is said to have been cut to pieces and the stray survivors sought refuge in pockets of safety. The Maratha men and women who escaped were hunted by the arms and the fear of the Durrani soldiers. In their flight to safety they would lurk in out of the way villages during the day time and travel only by night†.

The survivors made considerable sacrifice for saving their families from hostile local Muslim population. Some women and children escaped to Kaithal and are among the ancestors of some present families of Maratha Brahmans‡. Some women who became *sati* belonged to the *Vachhas gotra* and their monuments are near Kaithal.

The Maratha army founded 12 centres during the action. One of them was near Dadri, another at Kot Putli where there is a commemorative *samadh*. There is another *sati* monument in village Takan, bespeaking of a Maratha sojourn there§.

Pandit Sagar Datt further writes to say that at Kot Putli camp "there were two generals, one Maratha (Rajput) and the other our ancestor Keshavrao. The Maratha general lost his life prior to the battle. He was posted at a little post at some river beyond Delhi, and came in conflict with the Abdali trroops in their march towards Delhi. His head was brought to Kot Putli by Keshavrao and cremated at Kot Putli; his wife became *sati*. A *samadh* was raised there and the camp then moved on to Tikan and Dadri from where Keshavrao then went to the battle of Panipat."

The two heroes of the Panipat battle among the Marathas were cousins, Sadashivrao and Jejajirao and both had the highest rank

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*Pandit Prabhu Ram, Sarpanch, Birchpur.

†Pandit Bishambar Datt Garma, Panipat.

‡*Ibid.*

§Shri Sagar Datt, Rohtak.

of *Panj Hazari* in the army. They were defeated at the battlefield of *Kala Amb* and from there the message sent to Peshwa Balajirao said, "Both the pearl strings are broken and there is no count of the gold coin lost"*.

The obvious reference is to the destruction of the two Generals and the soldiery on the Maratha side.

Stories current about the escape of Sadashirvao Bhau from the field of battle are still fondly narrated. Some considerations, it is said, forced him to prefer a horse to the elephant from which he was commanding, and this made the Maratha soldiery take him as dead in the battle†. The consequent chaos in their army follows the usual pattern, in similar descriptions of other battles‡. Sadashivrao then escaped.

An old woman narrated a similar story of Bhau's escape to the subterranean passage under the Ramchandra temple at Panipat. He went, she says to a Hastanapur fort situate in weird surroundings where he spent the remaining days of his life.

The priestess of the *Maratha Mandir* also firmly believes in the existence of a subterranean passage which opens at this end in the temple and is covered by a large wooden door and leads out of this area. This she says was the favourite place of meeting of the Maratha leaders§.

Life

The passage of time has forced different occupations on the descendants of these proud but fallen fighters. Some of them are leading even a life of penury. Two of them were found in this condition by Shri Radha Krishan. But a large number of them responded to the challenge offered by a malignant fate and diverted their energies to different means of livelihood. A large number of them took to agriculture. Some very few are engaged in *prohitai* or priestly functions which Rose, however, described as, "degrading" in their eyes. In the present generation of the Marathas in the

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*"*Moti ki dono lariyan tut gain; survarna ki mudrika ka to koi shumar hi nahin*". Pandit Sham Lal, Priest, Devi Mandir, Panipat.

†*Ibid.*

‡An old woman, aged 85 years, at Kheora (Name not supplied).

§The Priestess of Maratha *Mandir*, Panipat.

Panjab are civil servants, agriculturists, soldiers and scholars alike*.

Their customs and manners, their costume and religious beliefs bear the total impact of two hundred years of unbroken stay in new surroundings. Their conformity to the local customs and usages in nearly all respects renders it difficult for the researcher to distinguish them by any other means than information specifically imparted to this end. In only some respect has tradition survived disaster and transplantation. The most conspicuous custom peculiar to the Marathas of this region and still observed is their ancestor or *sati* worship. The *sati* monuments are possibly of two types. One of these relates to the type of the monuments raised by the Marathas almost every where they settled, however, temporarily†. These were raised to provide a link with the ancestors; and were materially begun with himself from the monument at the place he last left.

The other type of monument appears to be the common ancestor worship monument raised over the remains of Maratha lady immolating herself with the corpse of her husband. The *satis*, already described and found at Kaithal, Dadri, Kot Putli, Tikan and Ablowal belong to this type. These are objects of devout worship and Maratha families from far and near come to them for worship on special occasions like marriages, etc. The most prominent of these monuments is the one outside the town of Kaithal.

Shri J. D. Sharma tells of a *sati* commemoration in the family when on the day immediately following the Diwali, the names of the ancestors of the family of Gaur Brahmans are taken. Among these occurs the name of Balirao, spoken of above‡.

The costume of the Marathas now in the Panjab is indistinguishable from that worn by the local population§. This approxi-

*Sarvshri Chhotu Ram, Ram Ratan of Sardhal; Chhajju Ram, Harbhaj, Jhandu Ram of Majra; Bishambar Datt Garma of Panipat; Harphul Singh, Sarpanch, Sikandarpur Majra; Ganesh Datt Shastri, Kaithal; Hari Chand Lambardar, Asandh; Raghunandan Lal and J. D. Sharma, Shahabad and Chandigarh; Puran Datt of Kaithal; and Babu Ram, Kaithal.

†Shri Sagar Datt, Rohtak.

‡Shri J.D. Sharma, Chandigarh.

§Sarvshri Ganesh Datt, Jagan Nath, Purshotam Das, Sardha Ram of Kaithal; Hari Chand Lambardar and Kanti Swaroop of Asandh; Prabhu Ram, Sarpanch of Birchpur; Mai Ram, Ramjas of Birchpur; Chhotu Ram Raita, Bharat Ram, Ram Ratan of Sargthal; Harphul Singh, Badlu Ram, Sita Ram, Jage Ram, Ganeshi Ram. Gokal Chand, Singh Ram, Siri Chand, Shiv Ram of Sikandarpur Majra, and Shri Sagar Datt of Rohtak.

mation to local customs dates back, according to one opinion, from the last hundred years*. The women wear ornaments like anklets, earrings, neklaces, forehead pendants, and dress in bordered *ghagris* or skirts, *susis* and *kurtas*. Sari and petticoats are also worn in Mohindargarh District. The men folk sport *kurtas* and *pajamas* or *chadars*. This is a depature from the *angarkha* and *turban* worn in earlier days†. The persons interviewed pointed to the custom of infanticide as having existed among the Marathas long but as having disappeared nearly 5 generations back‡. Widows do not re-marry§. The pattern of family organisation still follows the joint family system§. There is no strict observance of *parda* among the women and they often work in the fields‖. Marriages are contracted with the Brahmans only, and frequently with Brahmans of local population. Rose¶ is of the opinion that the local Gaurs were "constrained by the Maratha conquerors to consent to intermarry with them".

Circumstances may thus be said to have thrown the Marathas in the Panjab in the vortex of movement of time after they had in the first instance manfully completed the task of their survival following that acute crisis of Panipat¶.

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*Pandit Ganesh Datt Shastri, Pandit Jagan Nath and Pandit Purshotam Das, Kaithal.

†Pandit Sarda Ram, Kaithal.

‡Sarvshri Tek Chand, Meri Ram, Ganesh Datt, Jagan Nath, Purshotam Das, Sarda Ram of Kaithal; Hari Chand, Kanti Swaroop, Har Narain of Asandh; Prabhu Ram, Mai Ram, Ramjas of Birchpur; Chhotu Ram, Bharat Ram, Ram Ratan Raita of Sargthal; Harphul Singh, Badlu Ram, Sita Ram, Jage Ram, Ganeshi Ram, Gokal Chand, Singh Ram, Siri Chand, Shiv Ram of Sikandarpur Majra; Sagar Datt, Rohtak; Raghubir Parshad, Dadri; and Raghunandan Lal, Shahabad.

§*Ibid.*

‖Sarvshri Ganesh Datt, Jagan Nath, Purshotam Das, Sarda Ram, Miri Ram, Tek Chand of Kaithal; Hari Chand, Kanti Swaroop, Har Narain of Asandh; Prabhu Ram, Mai Ram, Ramjas of Birchpur; Chhotu Ram Raita, Bharat Ram, Ram Ratan of Sargthal; Harphul Singh, Badlu Ram, Sita Ram, Jage Ram, Ganeshi Ram, Gokal Chand, Singh Ram, Siri Chand, Shiv Ram of Sikandarpur Majra; Sagar Datt, Rohtak; Raghubir Parshad of Dadri; Raghunandan Lal, Shahabad.

¶Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Panjab And N.W.F.P.*, iii, p. 48.

¶[A still closer examination of the inner life of these settlers particularly with regard to their manners and customs is bound to reveal to what extent these people haee absorbed local ways and modes, and how far they have retained their original Maratha usages.—*Editor*]

List of persons interviewed

1. Shri Narain Datt, Advocate, Sangrur.
2. Rao Uttam Singh, formerly tutor to the Maharaja of Jind, Sangrur.
3. Shri Jadu Rai, Maratha Brahman, Sangrur.
4. Shri Dulu Ram, Maratha Brahman, Sangrur.
5. Pandit Puran Datt Shastri, Kaithal.
6. Pandit Ganesh Datt Shastri, Kaithal.
7. Pandit Purshotam Das, Kaithal.
8. Pandit Miri Ram, Maratha Brahman, Kaithal.
9. Pandit Tek Chand, Kaithal.
10. Pandit Jagan Nath Lambardar, Kaithal.
11. Pandit Hamir Chand, village Kol.
12. Pandit Sarda Ram, Kaithal.
13. Pandit B.R. Sharma, Kaithal.
14. Pandit Matu Ram, Kaithal.
15. Pandit Anant Ram, Kaithal.
16. Pandit Bidhi Chand, Kaithal.
17. Pandit Kanti Swaroop, Govt. High School, Asandh.
18. Pandit Hari Chand, Lambardar, Asandh.
19. Pandit Har Narain, Asandh.
20. Pandit Raghunath, Asandh.
21. Pandit Rati Ram, Asandh.
22. Pandit Sukh Lal, Asandh.
23. Pandit Mola Ram, Asandh.
24. Pandit Jethu Ram, Asandh.
25. Pandit Dev Datt, Asandh.
26. Pandit Chandu Lal, Asandh.
27. Pandit Hargolal, Asandh.
28. Pandit Narsi Datt, Asandh.
29. Pandit Prabhu Ram, Sarpanch, Birchpur.
30. Pandit Mai Ram, Birchpur.
31. Pandit Ganpat Rai, Birchpur.
32. Pandit Rachhpal Singh, Birchpur.
33. Pandit Ram Lal, Birchpur.
34. Pandit Baldev Mittar, Birchpur.
35. Pandit Hazari Lal, Birchpur.
36. Pandit Rakhya Ram, Birchpur.
37. Pandit Gita Ram, Birchpur.
38. Pandit Sahib Lala, Birchpur.

39. Pandit Mam Raj, Birchpur.
40. Pandit Hazari Lal, Birchpur.
41. Pandit Hans Ram, Birchpur.
42. Pandit Khushi Ram, Birchpur.
43. Pandit Kundan Ram, Birchpur.
44. Shri Ram Singh, Birchpur.
45. Pandit Chandan Ram, Birchpur.
46. Pandit Pohlu Ram, Birchpur.
47. Pandit Tota Ram, Birchpur.
48. Pandit Mehar Singh, Birchpur.
49. Pandit Banwari Lal, Birchpur.
50. Pandit Harsukh, Birchpur.
51. Pandit Bakhtawar Lal, Birchpur.
52. Pandit Brahma Nand, village Dhavana.
53. Pandit Baldev Ram, village Phurlak.
54. Pandit Badaman Ram, village Phurlak.
55. Shri Hargopal, village Mahmudpur.
56. Pandit Sham Sundar, Supdt. Municipal Committee, Karnal.
57. Pandit Bishambar Datt Garma, Panipat.
58. Pandit Sham Lal, Priest, Devi Mandir, Panipat.
59. The Priestess, Maratha Mandir, Panipat.
60. Pandit Genda Rai, Panipat.
61. Shri J.D. Sharma, I.A.S., Deputy Secretary to the Government of Panjab, Chandigarh.
62. Pandit Nathu Ram, village Hat.
63. Pandit Chandgi Ram, village Hat.
64. Pandit Lal Chand, village Hat.
65. Pandit Harphul Singh, village Hat.
66. Pandit Ram Phal, village Hat.
67. Pandit Kam Raj, village Hat.
68. Pandit Lal Chand, village Hat.
69. Chaudhari Khazan Singh, village Kheora.
70. An old woman aged 85 years, village Kheora. (Name not given).
71. Pandit Chhotu Ram, village Sargthal.
72. Pandit Bharat Ram, village Sargthal.
73. Pandit Raita Ram, village Sargthal.
74. Pandit Ram Ratan, village Sargthal.
75. Pandit Harphul Singh, Sarpanch, village Sikandarpur Majra.

76. Pandit Daya Chand, village Sikandarpur Majra.
77. Pandit Badlu Ram, village Sikandarpur Majra.
78. Pandit Dharam Chand, village Sikandarpur Majra.
79. Pandit Shiv Ram, village Sikandarpur Majra.
80. Pandit Surja Ram, village Sikandarpur Majra.
81. Pandit Mangu Ram, village Sikandarpur Majra.
82. Pandit Ganeshi Ram, village Sikandarpur Majra.
83. Pandit Gokal Chand, village Sikandarpur Majra.
84. Pandit Dali, village Sikandarpur Majra.
85. Pandit Ram Datt, village Sikandarpur Majra.
86. Pandit Mangha Ram, village Sikandarpur Majra.
87. Pandit Ram Saran, village Sikandarpur Majra.
88. Pandit Hardwari, village Sikandarpur Majra.
89. Pandit Lalman, village Sikandarpur Majra.
90. Pandit Kajje Ram, village Sikandarpur Majra.
91. Pandit Bhagwana Ram, village Sikandarpur, Majra.
92. Pandit Bhaya Ram, village Dob.
93. Pandit Sagar Datt, retired Supdt. Jail, Rohtak.
94. Pandit Raghubir Parshad, Advocate, Dadri.
95. Pandit Amrik Singh, Dadri.
96. Shri Kishan Singh, Dadri.
97. Shri Raghunandan Lal, retired S.D.O. Canals, Shahabad.*

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*[Our field operations were confirmed only to one region. There is every likelihood that Maratha settlers of this period may be traceable in other areas such as the sub-montane tracts of the Siwalik hills particularly in Ambala district. *Editor*]

CHAPTER XXV

THE MARATHAS AND THE SIKHS

The Marathas and the Sikhs are the children of revolution and have come into prominence on account of their struggle against the religious persecution during the seventeenth century. It is unfortunate that these two valiant communities could not consummate their union against their common enemy owing to lack of cultural understanding and political awakening. If the Marathas had allied themselves with the Sikhs in the Panjab, the Afghans would have been expelled from India, robbed and hunted by the Marathas and Sikh bands and as a result thereof the Indus would have been closed to the invasions from the north-west in 1758 A. D. There would have been no defeat and disaster of the Marathas in the fateful battle of Panipat nor ghallughara, bloody massacre of the Sikhs at Kup and Sikh rule might have been established in the land of five rivers much earlier. But it was destined to be otherwise. It required a lot of foresight, imagination and statesmanship to recognise the Sikhs as an important political force in those days when the Sikhs were vigorously persecuted by Mughal officials on one hand and by the Afghan officials on the other. The Marathas, therefore, chose Mughal Emperor and his Wazir as their allies for the conquest of the Panjab. Antaji Mankeshwar wrote to Peshwa on 5 December 1756, "Bapuji Mahadev also has kept the Emperor pleased in many ways so as to keep him in your honour's control..... The Wazir (Ghazi-ud-din) will leave for Lahore to attack the Chief of Pathans after five or seven days. We are of course accompanying him*". In another letter he wrote, "Both Raghunathrao and the Wazir are close friends. Raghunathrao is treated as if he were the Wazir's brother†."

The Maratha invasion of the Panjab was the outcome of their bargaining with Mughal Emperor and his Wazir. Half of the

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**SPD* xxvii, 205.

†*Ibid.*

tribute was to be paid to the Wazir and the Emperor and the other half was to be utilized by the Marathas. Antaji Mankeshwar Peshwa's commander at Delhi testified to this arrangement in a letter dated September 1758. He wrote, "under the terms agreed upon by us and which have been granted under our seal and by our word, half the collection is to go to the Emperor and the Wazir. This should be strictly adhered to. On no account under nobody's order should you hesitate to pay half the revenue from Sarhind, Doab (Jalandhar Doab) and Lahore. We have pledged our word mutually and it should be strictly observed*".

The Marathas were encouraged for their march towards the Panjab on account of the Afghan-Sikh antagonism and reverses sufferred by the Afghans. Ahmad Shah Abdali and his general Jahan Khan had roused the Sikhs to their highest exertion and united them in the closest bond for a vengeance, by demolishing their sacred temple at Amritsar, filling the holy tank with dirt and refuse, cutting to pieces the five sikh foot guards standing on the door, killing of Baba Dip Singh and his band of warriors whose memorial still stands in the precincts of Golden Temple, burning of Gurdwara Tham Sahib at Kartarpur † (District Jalandhar) and belabouring the Sikh holy Sodhi Barbhag Singh. As a result of all these outrages Sikhs had risen "in rebellion on all four sides"‡. This Afghan-Sikh antagonism was known to the Marathas as it has been mentioned in a Marathi despatch of 1757 A. D. "From Vasudeva Dikshita to Peshwa. Nagar Mal, the representative of Salabat Jang at Delhi has despatched a pair of messengers that reached Aurangabad after eighteen days and started from Salabat Jang's camp. Valji the chief messenger orally gave out the news brought by the pair while the Pathan's son (Timur Shah son of Ahmad Shah Abdali) was carrying away the treasure, Alha Jat, the resident of Sarhind and the Sikhs of sect of Nanak united together and overpowered the Pathan's son by blocking his way. They completely snatched away his treasures, again attacked and plundered him at Malerkotla§." Unlike Ahmad Shah Abdali who subsequently raised a cry of *jehad* the Marathas could not mobilise their resources and made a common

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**Ibid.*

†Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, i.

‡*Sarkar*, ii, 68.

§*SPD.*, xxi, 116.

cause with the Sikhs in order to pay the Afghan Emperor in his own coin.

It will be interesting to analyse the factors which created hinderances in the way of Maratha-Sikh unity despite their common aim against the Afghans. The Marathas had made a common cause with the Mughals and were fighting with the Afghans on behalf of the Mughal Emperor and his Wazir. As already stated half of the tribute collected by the Maratha was to go to the Mughal Emperor and his Wazir. The Marathas were recovering the territories from Afghans in order to establish Mughal rule which for the Sikhs had very bitter memories. Hence they could not be a party to such a political arrangement which was to perpetuate Mughal rule in the Panjab.

Adina Beg's exploitation of the political situation to his personal advantage left no room for the Marathas and the Sikhs to come to an understanding. Had the Marathas and the Sikhs united, Adina Beg would have lost the gains which he secured by the Maratha-Sikh victory over the Afghans. In that case Sikh rule might have been established a decade earlier in the land of five rivers. Instead of appointing Sadiq Beg as Governor of Sarhind Alha Singh would have been appointed as Governor seven years earlier and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia would have been installed as Governor of Lahore.

Another important cause which prevented Maratha-Sikh unity was that the Sikhs had embarked upon the career of conquest and held firm belief that they would rule over the Panjab which to their contemporaries in 1758 looked impossible. In this way their basis of understanding was different and their values in certain respects conflicting. Hence there could not be any stable understanding and unity of action between these two valiant communities.

The Sikhs were ever ready to co-operate with the Marathas; but they expected the initiative to come from Marathas who possessed longer political and administrative experience, and who had attained maturity in state craft. At the time of the Third Battle of Panipat, the Marathas sought assistance from Alha Singh, and it was willingly given. He undertook to help the Marathas at great personal risk.

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*Alha Singh was granted the insignia of royalty, kettle drum and banner. Qazi Nur Muhammad's *Jang Namah*, 48.

He had already invited the Marathas* when he was besieged by Abdus Samad Khan, the Afghan Governor of Sarhind who had made a common cause with Muhammad Amin Khan, the Bhatti chief, his enemy. The Marathas marched towards Sarhind and this gave relief to Alha Singh as the besieging army had to flee to Sarhind to face the Marathas†.

When Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India in 1759 in order to recover his lost possessions Sadiq Beg, Governor of Sarhind, fled to Delhi with the result that Abdali captured Sarhind in November 1759‡ A.D. After that Ahmad Shah Abdali crossed the Jamuna in order to give relief to Najib-ud-daulah who had been besieged by the Marathas. Alha Singh, however, did not leave his territory and prepared himself for the approaching crisis.

Though Sadashiv Bhau could not meet Alha Singh personally but there existed correspondence between the Patiala Chief and the Peshwa, as is clear from a Marathi despatch addressed to the Peshwa: "Your honour had sent some letter to Alha Singh Jat which have been replied by the Jat. All the details will be known from them"§. Unfortunately no details of this correspondence are traceable because according to G. S. Sardesai, Ahmad Shah Abdali intercepted the Maratha correspondence with the result that no Marathi letters are traceable for two months preceding the major action.

The greatest achievement of Alha Singh in the Battle of Panipat was to provide food to the Maratha camp which had been suffering from food shortage ever since the Maratha conquest of Delhi. When Abdali came to know about Alha Singh's help he sent a punitive expedition against the Patiala Chief. When the Durrani soldiers reached Barnala Alha Singh himself ¶ had left the place. His *Rani* Fateh Kaur (Fatto) tried to save the situation by deputing four officers, Bhola Singh, Kashmiri Mal, Kahna Mal, and Biram Dhillon to the Durrani camp to settle terms of peace and herself retired with her grandson Amar Singh to the fort of Munak. But before these men could reach Durrani camp, Barnala was plundered by Durranis who retired only after exacting the tribute of four lakhs‖. Thus

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**Kaghzat-e-Bhagwant Rai*, quoted in *Maharaja Ala Singh* by Karam Singh (Gurmukhi).

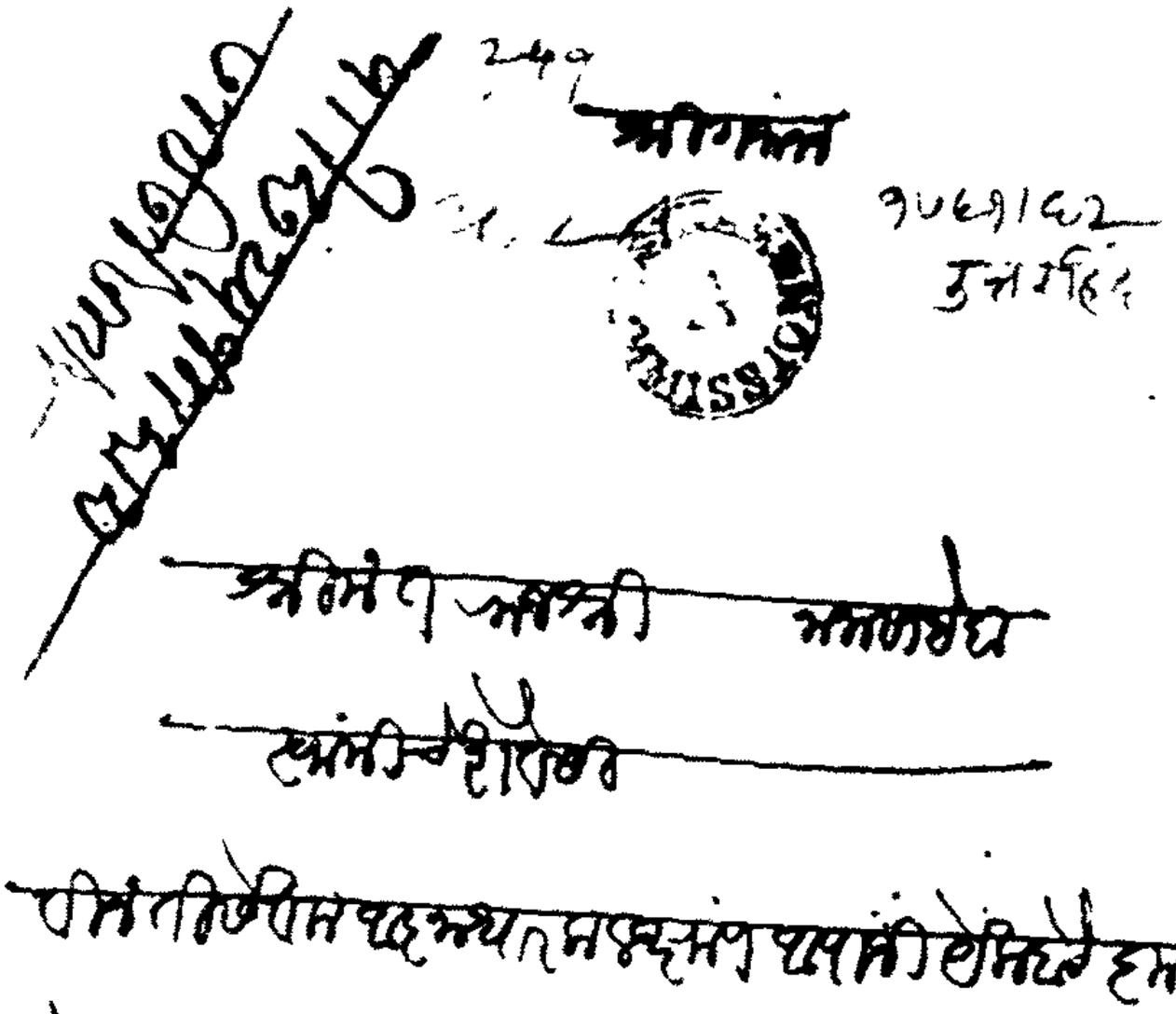
†My book *Maharaja ALA SINGH OF PATIALA AND HIS TIMES*, 86.

‡*Sarkar*, ii, 81.

§*SPD*, xxvii, 262.

¶*Tarikh-e-Bhau wa Jank*, MS, 41; *Khazanah-e-Amirah*, 107.

‖Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, i, 139.



LUXMAN APPAJI EKHOTE'S LETTER

Contd.

Alha Singh's supply of food grains to the Marathas was forcibly stopped*.

Alha Singh, however, continued to extend help to the Marathas even after the fateful Battle of Panipat (January 14, 1761). Alha Singh gave shelter to many Maratha fugitives as Laxman Appaji Ekhote wrote to Peshwa: "I was deputed by the Bhau to Sarhind along with Lakshmi Narain, when misfortune befell our army, Lakshmi Narain being a Hindustani secured a place for himself, with 56 or 60 Maratha sowars. I was left in the lurch. There was no place at all. A heavy rush followed. So I approached Alha Singh Jat who out of regard for your honour gave me shelter. Upto now I am with Jat Sardar"†.

Alha Singh proved to be a great ally of the Marathas. He helped them with food grains at the greatest‡ risk and at a time when the Marathas were in dire need of his help. Even after the Marathas disaster Ala Singh gave shelter to the Maratha fugitives. Thus Ala Singh stood with the Marathas not only at the time of their victory at Sarhind but also at the time of their disaster in the fateful Battle of Panipat§.

**Tarikh-e-Ahmad*, 36.

†*SPD*, xxvii, 262.

‡*Panth Parkash*, Ratan Singh, 331.

§[For reasons why Bhau did not seek Sikh assistance in general, see *supra*, 94, 124, 163.—*Editor*]

CHAPTER XXVI

ROLE OF SAHARANPUR

Saharanpur: Its extent, riches, revenue and administration

The district of Saharanpur, situated between the Ganga and the Jamuna rivers, forms the northern apex of the fertile plain of the Doab. Though this region came into the lime-light of history in ancient times as the numerous references to Hardwar and Kankhal in early literature and the discovery of ancient coins near Bahadarabad and Behat indicate, the city of Saharanpur was founded in 1364 A.D. by a Chishti saint of village Manak Mau named Shah Harun, whose tomb still exists in the heart of the city in what is called after him *Pir Ka Mohalla*, during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Soon the locality grew and became the seat and centre of administration of Upper Doab. According to the *Ain-e-Akbari* Saharanpur was a *sarkar* in the *subah* of Delhi. It was divided into the four *dasturs* (divisions) of Deoband, Kairana, Sardhana and Indra which were sub-divided into 36 parganas. The mahal of Saharanpur was in the possession of Afghans, Kalals and Tagas. A brick fort at Saharanpur afforded protection to this area. This *sarkar* was very rich and flourishing and yielded vast revenue and ample fighting forces.

It is noteworthy that the territory included in the present district of Muzaffarnagar formed part of the *sarkar* of Saharanpur. It was in 1825 that Muzaffarnagar was separated from Saharanpur and made a new district by the English. This whole region of Upper Doab was crownland (Khalsa) and privy purse estate (*sarf-e-khas*) Its revenue met the expenses of the imperial court at Delhi. The land had peace and was seldom visited by famine. It was so to say a granary of the empire having 16,88,746 bighas of land under cultivation. It was the favourite resort of the nobles and courtiers who used to come there for hunting or change of climate. In 1621 the

emperor Jahangir visited Hardwar and about the same time the empress Nur Jahan paid a visit to the district and took up her re-residence at a village now called Nurnagar in the north of Muzaffarnagar. The next emperor Shah Jahan liked the district very much and Ali Mardan Khan built the royal hunting lodge for him at Badshahi Bagh at the foot of the hills. The portions of the palace are still found near the headwaters of the canal which the same minister is said to have designed. In the reign of Aurangzeb the *sarkar* of Saharanpur was bestowed upon Shaikh Muhammad Baka, the reputed scholar and author of the Mirat-e-Alam, who held it till his death in 1683 and constructed many buildings, mosques and wells there.

The Anarchy following the death of Aurangzeb

The death of Aurangzeb ushered in an era of anarchy and disruption. Fissiparous forces became apparent on all sides*. In 1708 the Sikhs plundered Sarhind. Panic spread in Saharanpur and the Commissioner Ali Muhammad Khan fled to Delhi. The Sikhs crossed the Jamuna into Saharanpur and ravaged the Doab. But they were checked by the redoubtable Jalal Khan the founder of Jalalabad now in the Muzaffarnagar district.

From 1712 onwards the Barha Sayyids of Jansath became supreme in the district. After the fall of the Sayyids in 1720 their estates were conferred on Muhammad Amin Khan Itimad-ud-daulah and after his death Wazir Qamr-ud-din was appointed to administer these regions. In 1737 he sent Marahmat Khan to Saharanpur as governor with orders to resume all the *jagirs* of the Sayyids. But the Sayyids rose against him and killed him. Thereupon the Wazir assembled a large force, defeated the Sayyids and stormed their citadel at Jansath. In the battle Ali Muhammad Rohilla with an army of 20,000 soldiers assisted the Wazir. After the victory Azimullah established himself at Saharanpur and completed the resumption of the *jagirs* of the Sayyids†. After Nadir's return in 1739 Saharanpur became the scene of chaos and confusion.

In 1740 Azimullah was transferred to Malwa and Sharanpur was conferred upon Hafiz-ud-din Khan. But in the eastern parts

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* *Jauhar-e-Samsam* of Muhammad Mohsin Sadiki, Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own historians*, viii, 73.

† *Tarikh-e-Hind* of Rustam Ali, Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own historians*, viii, 57-8.

of the region bordering on the Ganga the Gujars became assertive and spread terror by their plunder and depredations. In the western territories of the district the Pathans of Jalalabad raised their heads and massacring the Tagas occupied their villages. To end this anarchy Hakim Khan was appointed in this district. He built a strong fort in village Harera as a bulwark against the Gujars and had a severe contest with them. In the meantime Zafar Khan known as Raushan-ud-daulah became the governor of this region and donated the mahal of Ambehta to his *pir* Shah Muhammad Baqir.

Afghan encroachments and settlements in and near Saharanpur

During the reign of Alamgir II there was a hectic dash and grab in all parts of the empire. In the Upper Doab the Afghan and Baluch captains usurped many estates. A Muhammad Najabat Khan Pathan belonging to Sarakhel resident of Utmanzai settled in village Bazidpur and founded a settlement on an islet in the bed of the Jamuna. As this region abounded in groves of brambla (kunja) this place came to be called Kunjpura though its real name was Najabat Kheri*. This citadel of Kunjpura commanded an important ford of the Jamuna 133 kilometres to the north of Delhi. It played a significant part in the events leading to the third battle of Panipat in 1761 which we would have occasion to study later. Besides the strategic citadel and estate of Kunjpura, the Afghans and Baluch's occupied many other territories in the district. One Auliya Khan Baluch usurped the estate of Nizamgarh in this district and Qutab Shah a collector of Saharanpur entrenched his hold there. This Qutab Shah was not a Rohilla by birth but was a *pir* or religious guide of the Rohillas. Soon after Alamgir's accession he obtained an imperial grant for some land in Saharanpur and Meerut districts. But when six months later the Wazir transferred these villages to the Marathas, Qutab Shah crossed the river Jamuna, entered the Sarhind region and siezed the villages without any authority. The Wazir sent the Sin-dagh regiment to bring him to book. But on 11 March 1755 he came out victorious in a contest, plundered the imperial tents and baggage and captured Thanesar and Sarhind. About the same time Kamgar Khan Baluch held the Hissar and Rohtak districts. Bahadur Khan Baluch occupied the region now

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**Saharanpurnama*, 196.

known as Bahadurgarh. Hasan Ali Khan established himself at Jhajjar and Asadullah Khan at Tauru.

Najib-ud-daulah at Saharanpur

To the east of the Ganga along the foot hills were the principalities of the Rohilla chiefs Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Dunde Khan, etc. who became independent after the death of Ali Muhammad Khan. Najib Khan administered the mahals of Chandpur, Nagina, Sherkot and Bijnore well and twice or thrice crossed the river Ganga into the mahals of the Emperor in the vicinity of Saharanpur and Bara and took possession of them. After his success against Safdar Jang, Imad-ul-mulk secured the *faujdari* of Saharanpur from the emperor for Najib-ud-daulah and allowed him to depart to his estate, as we gather from Nur-ud-din's histroy of Najib-ud-daulah*. But Biharilal in his *Ahwal-e-Najib-ud-daulah* states that after the civil war Najib proceeded to Aonla to study the situation there†. He tried to detach Sadullah from Hafiz Rahmat Khan and failing in the diplomatic move ultimately went back to the capital and then to his new assignment at Saharanpur. On the authority of *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, Jadunath Sarkar holds that the whole of Saharanpur was not granted to Najib-ud-daulah. He was of course given some *jagirs* in the upper Doab but had illegally extended them by seizing many villages in Saharanpur and Meerut districts‡. After the return of Ahmad Shah Abdali from India in April 1757, Najib-ud-daulah took possession of all the country of the Doab close to Delhi such as the mahals of Dasna, Meerut, etc. and himself stayed at Shahjahanabad.

It was in 1754 that Najib-ud-daulah reached Saharanpur. He first organised the administration and recruited an army. He built a fort and capital for him on the other side of the Ganga at what is called after him Najibabad in 1753-4, and about the same time constructed the forts of Pathargarh (two kilometres from Najibabad), Ghausgarh (58⅓ kilometres south-west of Saharanpur and 36⅓ kilometres north-west of Muzaffarnagar) and Sukkartal (28⅓ kilometres to the east of Muzaffarnagar). In 1757 crossing

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*Abdur Rashid, *Najibuddaulah, his life and times*, 9.
†*Ibid*, 123.
‡*Sarkar*, ii, 39.

the Siwalik he wrested Dehra Dun from Partap Shah and thus rounded up his occupation of the whole of the upper Doab.

Najib-ud-daulah and the Gujars

When Najib-ud-daulah was invited by Imad-ul-mulk to Delhi he went with his army of fourteen or fifteen thousand Rohillas to Miranpur and made friends with Nawab Fatehullah Khan of Katewrah. The latter introduced him to Rao Jit Singh Gujar of Parichitgarh who used to raid and plunder the neighbouring regions and brought about a friendship between them. Jit Singh accompanied Najib-ud-daulah to Delhi. Meanwhile Safdar Jang appointed Rajinder Giri Gosain the governor of Saharanpur and sent him to ravage and capture the township of Mawana. As its landlord Ahmad Said Khan was also siding with Najib. Rajinder Giri invested Mawana with 15,000 or 16,000 soldiers, inflicted a defeat on S'aadat Ali Khan and Mohsin Ali Khan and plundered all their baggage. To meet this menace Imad commissioned Jit Singh to proceed against Rajinder Giri. Parvarish Ali Khan and Tahawwar Ali Khan landlords of Barah went out to help Jit Singh. At that time Rajinder Giri was campaigning against Dilawar Ali Khan *rais* of Jalalabad. An encounter took place between Jit Singh and Rajinder Giri near Muzaffarnagar in which the latter was defeated and killed*. The emperor was very pleased with Jit Singh and honoured him with the title of *Raja* and conferred on him the villages Shondat, Dayalpur, Sheopure and Pothi in pargana Hastanapur. In 1754 Jit Singh marched against the Muslim Rajputs of Jwalapur near Hardwar,* who tyrannised over the Brahmans of that sacred place, and massacred them.

In the eastern parts of Saharanpur the Gujars had set up an estate of their own at Landhaura. Their family tradition is that they migrated to this district from Dharanagari during Muslim rule†. At the time of Muhammad Shah they withheld the payment of land revenue whereupon Hakim Khan built a fortress at Jhabarera to suppress them. But Najib-ud-daulah made friends with Manohar Singh and allowed him to capture many other villages

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**Saharanpur-nama*, 41.

†*Saharanpur-nama*, 40, 200.

[Rajindra Giri was killed in Delhi while attacking Kalipahari on 15 June 1753. *Sarkar*, i, 276-7.—*Editor*.]

in the neighbourhood. In 1759 he issued the grant of 505 villages to Manohar Singh.* At that time he was trying to consolidate his hold on the Doab and was glad to purchase the assistance of such a powerful ally as the head of the leading Gujar clan. It appears that the rapprochement between Gujars of Parichitgarh led by Jit Singh and those of Landhaura headed by Manohar Singh was brought about through the agency of Najib-ud-daulah. The friendship of the Gujars obviously proved a great asset to Najib-ud-daulah in that time of troubles.

Najib-ud-daulah's administration at Saharanpur

Najib-ud-daulah made the western parts of the township his headquarters. The village Najibpura about 5 or 6 Kilometres to the west of Saharanpur city on the Chilkana-Halalpur road bears an imprint of the settlement of Najib-ud-daulah. He re-organised the parganas and mahals and made drastic changes in their administration. His policy was to break up the existing mahals into small units and appoint efficient officials there for the facility of administration and security. He separated some villages from the pargana of Deoband and reconstituted them as the pargana of Katha to hold the turbulent Pandir Rajputs in check. Likewise Badgaon was made a separate charge and an *amil* was stationed there. The pargana of Behat was separated from Sultanpur and Kanjawar, once part of Behat and was joined to Muzaffarabad. A *taluka* was taken away from this region and given to Anwar Khan who founded the estate of Patehar there. This estate commanded the ford of the Jamuna near Buria. A fortress was constructed there. That fort has now been swept away by the current of the river and only some remains of a mosque and a *pacca* well are its present vestiges. As the *patera*(a kind of mushroom) grew abundantly there in the bed of the Jamuna the estate was called Pathehar‡. We have already seen how Najabat Khan had founded the citadel of Kunjpura on another ford of the Jamuna. The control of these two strategic fords of Buria-Pathehar and Kunjpura on the Jamuna in the west and on the Ganga in the east immensely strengthened and secured the position of Najib-ud-daulah in Saharanpur and the upper Doab.

**This grant* (Patta) of Najib-ud-daulah was produced by the descendants of Nahar Singh before Mr. Chamberlain, the collector of the district after the establishment of British rule in the district in 1803. *Saharanpurnama*, 200.

†*Saharanpurnama*, 196.

To the south of Pathehar, Najib-ud-daulah created another important outpost by separating some territory from the Pargana of Gangoh and giving it over to his *amil* Jamal Khan. This officer changed the name of village Agbana into Jamalgarh, made it a pargana and constructed a fortress there. For this purpose he cut 52 gardens of the Tagas and occupied eleven villages belonging to them. This policy resulted in the dispersal of the Tagas from that region. They were later rehabilitated there during the regime of Mahadji Sindhia. Thus the whole district was re-organised by Najib-ud-daulah.

Najib-ud-daulah established a sound administration in his estate and promoted agriculture and industrial crafts. G.R.C. Williams in his *Memoirs of Dehradun* states that in the regime of Najib-ud-daulah "canals were built, wells were sunk and land came under cultivation. Trade followed in the footsteps of cultivation. Nagola, Rajpur, Bhagwantpura, Thanoo and Bharapur are even now known as Hatnalas, 'hat' denoting market. This era of prosperity came to an end in 1770 A.D., for in that year Najib-ud-daulah died". As a result of these arrangements the annual revenue from Dehra Dun became Rs. 1,20,000 according to Williams*. His revenue from Saharanpur has been estimated by Nur-ud-din at Rs. 75,000†. Thus Najib-ud-daulah made his financial and military position very sound.

The Marathas and the Saharanpur region

When Imad-ul-mulk bought the assistance of the Marathas and failing to pay them the promised dues handed over 22 mahals in Saharanpur *sarkar* to them, this region first came within the ken of these people. But the Marathas could not establish any sound administration or revenue-system in these areas. Raghunathrao though a military leader lacked the qualities of an administrator. He could not stabilise the government of the territories which he received from the Mughals. "Govind Pant Bundele conveyed to the Peshwa plain sentiments disapproving Raghunathrao's ways"‡. At that time Antaji Mankeshwar the military commandant at Delhi and the Hingane brothers the diplomatic representatives of the Peshwa at the imperial court vied with each other in the acquisition

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*Cited in Abdur Rashid, *Najibuddaulah*, XI.

†*Ibid*, XII.

‡*Sardesai*, ii, 381.

and accumulation of money by hook or crook. Sindhia and Holkar also looked upon each other with suspicion and rivalry. Raghunathrao failed to iron out the differences of these chiefs and retired to the south with a huge financial liability.

In August 1757 Raghunathrao and Malharrao Holkar again arrived at Delhi as the allies of the Wazir Imad-ul-mulk. They quickly took possession of Najib-ud-daulah's *jagir* in Saharanpur. It was only at Meerut that Najib's agents offered resistance at the head of 3,000 men but were worsted by Antaji Mankeshwar. A Rohilla contingent of 1,000 which was coming from beyond the Ganga to uphold Najib's power in Meerut was scared away from the way by Antaji's lieutenant who held Hapur. Saharanpur and Meerut were also freed from the agents of Najib*. But the law and order and collection of revenue could not be restored easily. To quote Sarkar—the whole of the Doab had become a no-man's land seething with disorder. Almost every village had been fortified with mud walls and the petty rajas with their armed bands had seized as much land as they could—2,000 of such mud forts were reported in the Doab by the Maratha agents and their conquest by force would have taken years and a full-sized army and exhaustless gunmunition†. Hence the Marathas could not find money in the Doab though the Peshwa in distant Deccan was banking on this presumed Doab revenue. Raghunathrao advanced up to Garh Mukteshwar and Malharrao marched into the Upper Doab by way of Luni (the route of the Shahdara-Saharanpur light railway) levying a tribute of Rs. 2,000 at Baghpat and Rs. 17,000 at Baraut and sacked and ravaged the whole of Saharanpur district, towns and villages treating it as Najib's *jagir*. This march was marked by loot, killing and desolation. At Jhanjhana many people were slain in course of plundering as we gather from the *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*. From Saharanpur Malhar crossed the Jamuna at Ramraghat, looted Karnal and Taraori and sacked upto Thanesar. Then he returned to Saharanpur. Meanwhile Najib had fled to the other side of the Ganga at Najibabad. But neither Malharrao or Ranko Anaji thought of entrenching their hold over Saharanpur or establishing any stable administration or military base there. Rather they and Raghunathrao precipitately decided to leave Saharanpur and Upper

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**Sarkar*, ii, 139.

†*Ibid*, 140 citing *SPD*, xxvii, 195, 196, 168, 170.

Doab and march into the Panjab. The Wazir's agents were too incompetent to hold these regions and soon Najib drove them away and recovered Saharanpur and Baraut and other places that belonged to him.

The important man in the Maratha camp was Malharrao Holkar. But as the author of the *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* observed he was suborned by Najib-ud-daulah. Raghunathrao was fully alive to the fact that his deadliest foe in the north was Najib and no truck with him was of any advantage as his advice to Jankoji and Dattaji Sindhia shows but owing to the partiality of Malharrao for him and his own weakness and want of initiative he could not himself nip him in the bud though occasions came to him for doing it.

The spirit to organise and administer was conspicuous by absence when the Marathas marched into the Panjab. Rather the leaders were after money and booty. "Antaji Mankeshwar, the Hinganes, Govindpant Bundele, Gopalrao Barve and others like them were all more or less corrupt carrying on nefarious transactions to satisfy their selfish greed or private picque*." After the lightning march into the Panjab the Marathas suddenly retired and disappeared from the north. Raghunath received strong appeals from various quarters that he should stay on till Dattaji or some other responsible leader should arrive on the scene but he returned home from Karnal even without caring to visit Delhi. The Maratha acquisitions in the Upper Doab and Saharanpur collapsed like a house of cards.

Then came the third Maratha invasion of the north and the occupation of Saharanpur. In January 1759 Dattaji Sindhia arrived at Barari Ghat and despatched a large force to Saharanpur. At that time Vithal Shivdeo was near Saharanpur coping with Najib's attempts to defy the Marathas. But the Sindhias repeated the mistake of Raghunathrao. Instead of strengthening his position and consolidating his hold over Delhi and Saharanpur and curbing Najib he plunged into the Panjab. Raghunathrao had advised the Sindhias to treat Najibas their implacable foe and remove this menace root and branch. The only way of doing this was to occupy his estate of Saharanpur and organise a strong military base and sound civil administration there and from there pounce upon and destroy Najib. But Dattaji neglected this strategy and became oblivious of Najib

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*Sardesai, ii, 398.

and the source and secret of his strength*. Rather he marched into the Panjab placing Sabaji there. In May 1759 after reconquering Panjab he crossed the Jamuna at the Ramraghat and came to Shamli. There he engaged in a conciliatory tussle with Najib forgetting what Raghunath had advised him to the expedition of Bihar. Najib retired to Saharanpur from Shamli and Dattaji went to Jansath and Meerut. As Najib refused to cede the parganas of Saharanpur which he had reoccupied a trial of strength between them became inevitable. The grim episode of Sukkartal followed.

Govindpant Bundele in Upper Doab

When Sadashivrao failed to cross into Saharanpur as planned he urged upon Gopalrao Barve and Ganesh Sambhaji Khankekar to ravage the lower Doab and pounce upon the territories of Shuja-ud-daulah and deputed Govindpant Bundele to hold the Upper Doab and occupy the estate of Najib-ud-daulah which was the source of supplied of Abdali. According to the *Mirat-e-Ahmadi* of Ali Muhammad Khan, written only eight months after the battle of Panipat 1761, Bhau "posted a force on the further side of Jamuna by closing the path of the coming of grain, fodder and powder and shot from Najib-ud-daulah's territory to the Shah's army, and another force on the western side of the Jamuna to close the road from Delhi"†. So conscious of the strategic and economic importance of the Upper Doab Bhau was that he wrote letter after letter to Govindpant to press home his attacks and pursue his task. In a despatch of 4 November 1760, he wrote to him, "We are now face to face with enemy and have prepared ourselves for an encounter having pitched our tents at Panipat. Abdali's way home is completely blocked by us.....Now the Doab is freely open and you must bring treasure and supplies from your district and deliver them at Patparganj opposite the south corner of the city of Delhi whence we shall manage to take them. You must stop any treasure and supplies reaching Abdali from the Doab‡." For a time Govindpant

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*Dattaji issued orders forbidding Govind Bundele to enter Najib's parganas because in that case Najib would have stopped paying money to Antaji Mankeshwar which he was commissioned to receive from him and thus Antaji would have been antagonised. (T.S. Shejwalkar, *Panipat*, 1761, p. 15.)

†Jadunath Sarkar, "The earliest Persian account of Panipat, 1761"; Sardesai Commemoration Vol., 258.

‡Cited by *Sardesai*, ii, 427.

succeeded in tightening his grip over the Upper Doab and cutting the supplies and communications of Abdali. Consequntly scarcity prevailed in the Abdali camp: "In the course of three days, the price of grain rose to a rupee a seer in the Shah's camp and the soldiery became down-cast and disspirited on account of the dearth of the provisions" as Muhammad Jafar Shamlu an eyewitness remarked*. Kashiraj states that the price of flour soared up to two rupees per seer. To quote him: 'Govind Pant in accordance with these letters (of Bhau) arrived with ten to twelve thousand horse near Delhi and encamped in the district of Meerut, stopping the passage of provisions, and in consequence of it such scarcity raged in the camp of the Shah and others that a seer of coarse flour could not be procured even for two rupees"† Ali Muhammad Khan in his *Mirat-e-Ahmadi* states the "great scarcity reigned in the Shah's camp, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ seers of flour selling for a rupee"‡. On November 1760 Krishna Joshi wrote from the Maratha camp that no corn was reaching the Abdali camp and extreme scarcity reigned there whereas the Maratha supplies were plentiful.

At that time Govindpant seems to have committed a serious mistake. He stopped to recover a ransom promised by a local chieftain Jita Gujar and pressed the demand so much as to alienate the latter§. This Jita Gujar is most probably identical with the Gujar chief Jit Singh of Parichhatgarh who cultivated a friendship with Najib-ud-daulah a decade earlier when he was proceeding to Delhi for the first time on the invitation of Imad-ul-mulk. Govindpant Bundele had not the wisdom to win over these Gujar houses to his side as about two decades later Bhairon Pant Tantia the agent of Mahadji Sindhia had when he brought to his side the Gujar chief of Landhaura Ram Dayal Singh. Hence Jita or Jit Singh communicated the news of Govindpant's whereabouts and activities to Abdali and at his direction¶ he despatched a select force of some 5,000 horsemen under the dashing Atai Khan who had recently

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*Muhammad Ja'far Shamlu, *Tarikh-i-Manazil-ue-Futuh*, Elliot and Dowson, *op.cit.*, viii, 149.

†Kashiraj translated by Jadunath Sarkar, 'Events leading upto the Battle of Panipat 1761, '*Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XI (1935) P. 551.

‡Jadunath Sarkar, *The Earliest Persian Account of Panipat*, 1761, *Sardesai Commemoration Volume* (1938) p. 259.

§T. S. Shejwalkar, *Panipat*, 1761, p. 71.

¶Shejwalkar, *Panipat*, 1761, p. 71.

come from Afghanistan. A few thousand Rohillas also joined him to show the way and probably the Gujars also helped them in pointing the encampment of Govindpant. We know that the invaders moved under a ruse. They assumed different colours and led Govindpant to believe that they were in fact the soldiers of Naro Shankar coming from Delhi. Hence when he was completely off his guard the invaders pounced on him. This event took place on 17 December 1760 according to Sarkar and on 20 December according to Shejwalkar. We learn from the *Mirat-e-Ahmadi* of Ali Muhammad Khan that the Afghans captured 20,000 bullocks laden with grain which were being taken to the Maratha camp*. Even making allowance for exaggeration this shows that Govindpant had made fairly adequate arrangement of food-supplies for the Marathas. But his death resulted in the transference of that abundant supply to the Abdali camp.

The fall of Govindpant transferred the scarcity of foodstuffs from the Abdali camp to the Maratha side. Thenceforth the Marathas began to face a grain famine,† and were eventually reduced to great straits the consequences of which we know full well.

Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Saharanpur region

On 25 December 1759, Abdali again crossed the Jamuna into Saharanpur and was greeted by Najib-ud-daulah there. We have seen how Kunjpura and Patehar-Buria were held by the men of Najib. Muhammad Daler Khan son of Najabat Khan of Kunjpura and Anwar Khan son of Umar Khan of Patehar went to the Panjab to welcome Ahmad Shah Abdali‡. It was probably with their aid and guidance that Ahmad Shah marched along the foothills of the Siwalik range and crossed into Saharanpur at Buria Ghat. In the western part of Saharanpur city there is a Mohalla called Buria Darwaza. Perhaps the road from Buria to Saharanpur lay through that area. Hence advancing along that road Abdali came straight to Saharanpur. While his army was crossing the river at Buria,

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*Jadunath Sarkar, "*The Earliest Persian Account of Panipat*, 1761, *Sardesai Commemoration Volume*, 259.

†According to the reports that reached the author of *Mirat-e-Ahmadi* soon after the battle 60,000 Maratha horses besides other beasts and men without number died of famine. (Sarkar, *op. cit.*, 259.)

‡*Saharanpurnama*, 197.

a portion had effected its passage, the other was midway across the stream and another was still waiting to cross when the Marathas made a vigorous charge and a tremendous conflict ensued but the Marathas were discomfited and defeated.

At that time the Saharanpur region was full of strong pockets of Muslims from outside India. In Saharanpur proper there was a large band of Rohillas besides numerous Lodis. In Roorkee there was a settlement of Ghoris, Jafris besides the Muhammadzais, Tarim, Warakzais, Khalils and Afridis. Near Roorkee there were the estates of Muhammadan Rajputs at Chaurasi Sakanda and Garh which were separated from the parganas of Roorkee under Rao Qutb-ud-din Khan at the time of Zabita Khan. At Jwalapur on the Ganga was another strong locality of the Muslim Rajputs who were once curbed by Jit Singh Gujar. At Nakur there was a large colony of Bukharis and Kakars and other Pathans. Near Gangoh Jamal Khan the *amil* of Najib-ud-daulah had set up a strong Rohilla principality by creating the pargana of Jamalgarh. At Lakhnauti there was a strong centre of the Turcomans and Khera Afghan still derives its name from the settlement of the Afghans. Near Deoband about fifteen kilometres to the east of it was the estate of the Shaikh Quraishis at Rajupur founded by one Shaikh Raju Khan. In this way Saharanpur was teeming, with Muslim settlements mostly of foreign descent. Najib had circulated the false news among the Muslims that the Marathas had deposed the Mughal Emperor of Delhi and installed in his place Vishwasrao*. Thus the Muslim opinion was completely antagonized and the Muslims treated the war with the Marathas as a communal crusade. Kashiraj has quoted Abdali as saying, "I have come to this country solely for God's sake, to help my fellow-clansmen and the Muslim community"†. Under these circumstances it becomes understandable that Abdali received abundant supplies from the Saharanpur-Meerut region. Shejwalkar has computed the supplies as 200 maunds of grain and 15,000 rupees cash a day,‡ in the beginning which increased in course of time. At first Abdali's camp was at some distance from the Jamuna. But after the death of Govindpant he moved his camp quite close to the bank of Jamuna§. This ensured him a plentiful

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Sardesai, ii, 423.

†*Kashiraj*, Sarkar's translation, *op. cit.*, 555.

‡*Shejwalkar*, *op. cit.*, 45.

§*Sardesai*, *op. cit.*, 428.

supply of water and made his communication with the Saharanpur region easy and secure. In this way the rich supplies from Saharanpur began to flow easily and incessantly into Abdali's camp. In this way the Saharanpur region contributed a lot to the success of Abdali and the failure of the Marathas.

The *Mirat-e-Ahmadi* of Ali Muhammad Khan informs us that Najib-ud-daulah had stationed his son Zabita Khan at Saharanpur to supervise and regulate the supplies of grain from that region to the Abdali camp. Zabita Khan carried out this duty very efficiently. This text states that "the son of Najub-ud-daulah with a strong escort conveyed from the Saharanpur Zila much grain to the Durrani camp so that scarcity was turned into plenty there"*.

Concluding observations

The aforesaid dissertation brings the strategic and economic importance of the Saharanpur region into bold relief. It shows that the Marathas had occasions to consolidate their hold over this region but they missed every one of them. Thus we find that Maratha policy in the north particularly the Doab and the Saharanpur region was devoid of any administrative stability, revenue settlement, diplomatic shrewdness or popular support. The greedy Malhar Holkar, the fickle Raghunathrao, the tactless Dattaji, the zealous Sadashiv Bhau or the exacting Govind Bundele besides a host of other leaders and generals yearning for money were not equal to the last of conquering and administering the Doab. In their blind greed they could not even think of winning over such elements as the Gujars of Saharanpur which they could easily do as subsequent history demonstrated. On the other hand the shrewd and sagacious Najib-ud-daulah not only established a sound civil and fiscal administration at Saharanpur but also endeared himself to the local redoubtable Gujars. Hence though the Marathas swept through Saharanpur thrice they could not damage the administrative system of Najib-ud-daulah.

A study of the battle of Panipat shows that it was mainly a case of scarcity versus plenty or starvation versus food supply. When the Marathas were in an advantageous position and Abdali was faced with starvation they did not move and strike for reasons best

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**Sarkar, op. cit.*, p. 259.

known to them which even the authors of the *Bhau Sahibji Bakhar* and *Kaifiyat* deplore. And when the advantage swang over the Abdali side they lashed out and fell as hungry bellies often do. It was Saharanpur with its abundant food supplies which dictated the verdict at Panipat on the fateful day of fourteenth January 1761*.

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*According to the Bhau Ballad current among the *jogis* Bhau went to the village of Bhaupur some twelve miles to the south-west of Panipat after the battle (Shejwalkar, *Panipat*, 1761, p. 79). Shejwalkar quotes the *Muzaffarnagar Gazetteer*, p. 9 to show that in that district there was a high mound near Jamuna on which stood a Maratha fort connected with the name of Sadashiv Bhau. Curiously enough in the Saharanpur district hardly five or six kilometres from the city near the Ambala road and in the vicinity of the Telegraph Training Centre there is also a village Bhaupur which can be easily connected with this cycle of legends. This legend spread on as a result of the deep impression made by the heroic activities and sacrifice of this Maratha leader on the minds of the people in the Doab.

CHAPTER XXVII
ROLE OF DELHI

Introductory

That Delhi, the eternal city on the Jamuna, the mistress of India, the home of light and learning, the abode of wit and wisdom, the residence of sovereigns and soldiers, the habitat of politicians and statesmen, the dwelling of ministers and administrators, the place of poets and patricians, and the land of artists and artisans, would soon after Aurangzeb sink into sloth and sensuality, would throw to the winds all national pride and patriotism, would indulge as a fetish in civil wars, social wars, mutual wrangles, reciprocal brawls and joint feuds, would degenerate into a rabble hot in faction, battle cold, and would be so degraded as to invite outside help both internal and external, would have been thought to be impossible, if it had not happened.

What was the result ?

That from 1739 to 1761, Delhi fell a victim to nine (गर्दी) *Gardis* periods of hurly-burly, and that it was sacked twice by Nadir Shah, five times by Ahmad Shah Durrani, once by Surajmal Jat, once by Jit Singh Gujar, once by Baluchis under Bahadur Khan of Bahadurgarh in Rohtak District, eight times by Najib-ud-daulah Rohilla, eight times by Marathas, and in one year alone eleven times by Mughal officials and Turki soldiery of the imperial government; and that once a dignified people became a mob, that none escaped the plunder of his riches and property, the destruction of his hearth and home, the ravishing of his women, individual insult and injury, and colllective murders and massacres.

This is the sickening tale of woe and whop, the heart-rending story of misery and misfortune, the nerve-racking account of penury and poverty, the soul-stirring description of the utmost degradation; when two Emperors were beheaded, one ex-queen and queen-mother was blinded and killed, a grand wazir of 15 years' standing was made to stand in the sun, and forced to pay one kror of rupees, another ex-prime minister was strangled to death, and his corpse tied to a heavy stone was

thrown into the river Jamuna, when the crown-prince later known as Shah Alam fled from Delhi to save his life; when even queens were starved for days together, and welcomed an earthen mug of bad broth from a charity-kitchen, when princesses tried to run away to beg food in the street, when favourite queens travelled in the dirty clothes of a water-carrier's wife and on his bullock, and when the Emperor enjoyed a hearty laughter at their sight; when the half-dressed Prime Minister of the Mughal Empire was pulled out of his mansion-house, dragged on foot through the public bazars and streets to the cantonment $3\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres distant, abused, insulted and occasionally beaten all the way, when all the prettiest wives and maiden daughters of Mir Bakhshi Samsam-ud-daulah were dragged to bed (*Madkhulah kard*) by Nadir Shah, when one hundred beautiful women from the harem of ex-Prime Minister Intizam-ud-daulah were taken away by Ahmad Shah Durrani to his personal camp, when all the wives, sisters and even mothers of Prime Minister Imad-ul-mulk were violated by Rohillas, when 350 queens and princesses along with thousands of other women of lesser rank were pulled out of the covered carriages (*raths*), stripped of all their jewellery and fine clothing and were raped on the sand in the open by Maratha soldiery, when the billeted foreign troops slept with the people's wives and daughters before the very eyes of their husbands and fathers, and when the Turkish, Afghan, Qizalbash, Rohilla, Jat, Gujar, Baluch, Mughal and Maratha blood frequently flowed in the veins of the younger generation of Delhi; and when poets like Sauda, Soz, Hasan, Mir Taqi Mir and many more with the exception of Mir Dard left this city to seek refuge at Lucknow.

NADIR SHAHI OR NADIR GARDI

(1) Massacre of 11 March 1739

Nadir Shah's invasion of India was indirectly invited by the Government of Delhi. Emperor Muhammad Shah had failed to extend his greetings to Nadir Shah on his accession to the throne of Iran, according to the old custom and usage which had prevailed between these two countries for centuries. No heed had been paid to Nadir Shah's repeated entreaties to prevent his enemies, the Afghans of Qandhar province, against whom he was waging a war, from taking shelter in the Mughal province of Kabul. Nadir Shah's four envoys one after another were dismissed with only oral promises.

The fifth who demanded a written answer was given "neither a reply nor the permission to return"*. He was detained for one year as the Delhi Court could not decide "what titles they should use to Nadir Shah"†. The north-western frontier of India was utterly neglected. It had been under the charge of an indolent and negligent governor who spent his time in hunting and prayers for nineteen years‡. He was not provided with necessary funds. The pay of his army had been in arrears for five years (1733-8). The soldiers were poorly fed, badly armed and beggarly equipped§.

Zakariya Khan, the Panjab Viceroy, was induced by Nizam-ul-mulk of Haidarabad, Deccan, and S'aadat Khan of Avadh, both present in Delhi, to admit Nadir Shah into Lahore¶.

Nadir Shah was a Turk. His army consisted of Turks, Kurds, and Mongols. He talked with Muhammad Shah in Turkish. He and his soldiers were ferocious and fiery, and they had nothing of Persians in their manners and character. After the battle of Karnal, Nadir agreed to return to his country for an indemnity of Rs. 50 lakhs of which Rs. 20 lakhs were to be paid immediately, 10 lakhs at Lahore, 10 lakhs at Attock and 10 lakhs at Kabul. The peace negotiations had been conducted by Nizam-ul-mulk, who as a price got his own son Firoz Jang appointed to the office of the Paymaster-General (*Bakhshi-ul-mumalik*). Another noble Azimullah Khan claimed this post, and at the head of his troops he marched to join Nadir Shah. He was pursued by the Nizam and the Wazir, who persuaded him with utmost difficulty to return. S'aadat Khan of Avadh had also coveted this post and Nizam-ul-mulk had promised to support his candidature. S'aadat Khan interviewed Nadir Shah and told him to march to Delhi, and take possession of cash and property worth more than Rs. 50 krors, and to reject the indemnity of Rs. 50 lakhs. Nadir agreed.

The total army numbering about 3,50,000 men marched in a column 20 kilometres long and 5 kilometres wide. Nadir Shah and Muhammad Shah arrived at the Shalimar Garden, 12 kilometres north of Delhi, on 7 March 1739. On

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**Irvine*, ii, 321.
†*Ibid*, 322.
‡*Siyar*, i, 93.
§Gupta, *Later Mughal History of the Panjab*, 28-9.
¶Contemporary historian Shakir Khan of Panipat, quoted in *Irvine*, ii, 325, f.n.

8 March Muhammad Shah came to the city to make arrangements for Nadir's reception. On the morning of Friday, 9 March, the Qizalbash troops stood on both sides of the road from Shalimar Garden to the Red Fort. Nadir was preceded by 100 elephants on whom a number of gunners were seated. Nadir, riding on a horse, entered the city. The most expensive rugs and carpets made of the cloth of gold were spread for his *pa-andazi* (setting his foot upon). He was presented with trained elephants, finest horses, and hundreds of handsomest boys and prettiest girls. He was lodged in Shah Jahan's palace. Some of the Turk and Qizalbash soldiers were encamped in and around the Red Fort, while majority of them were billeted in people's houses*.

On Saturday, 10 March, Nadir was proclaimed Emperor from Jama Masjid and other mosques, and received from Muhammad Shah vast treasures and enormous riches as offering. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon some mischief mongers raised a tumult shouting that Nadir Shah had been murdered in the palace. The people rose against the Turks, Kurds and Mongols, and murdered about 3,000 of them. Neither the Government nor the public leaders took any steps to verify the rumour and check the riff raff. At sunrise on Sunday morning, 11 March, Nadir Shah rode to the Golden Mosque of Raushan-ud-daulah in Chandni Chauk, and ordered a general massacre only in those *mohallas* where his soldiers had been killed. His troopers who knew nothing but destruction looted houses, massacred men, women and children, took young girls as slaves, and set fire everywhere. The slaughter continued from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., when it was stopped as a result of Muhammad Shahs' entreaties. About 20,000 persons were killed, and a few thousand more, mostly women, committed suicide by drowning themselves in wells. For some days the lanes, streets and bazars lay littered with dead bodies. With Nadir's permission Faulad Khan, the city Kotwal, heaped all of them, Hindus and Muslims alike, in open places, and burnt them with the timber of demolished houses serving as fuel. A large number of corpses were thrown into the river Jamuna†.

Jahankusha, 355.

†*Jahankusha*, 357-9; *Hanway*, ii, 376.

(2) Ransom, Rape and Rapine, March-May 1739

After this massacre the city and its suburbs remained in a state of siege. All the property of late Khan-e-dauran, the head of the Imperial Army, was confiscated. All of his pretty wives and maiden daughters were dragged to bed by Nadir Shah*. The entire property of Muzaffar Khan, the personal favourite of the Emperor, who had been killed in the battle was seized.

On 26 March Nadir married his younger son Nasrullah Mirza to Iffat-un-Nisa Begam, daughter of Dawar Bakhsh whose mother was a daughter of Aurangzeb. According to the Mughal custom, Nasrullah was required to give an account of his ancestors up to seventh generation. Nadir Shah told him to say that he was the son of Nadir Shah, grandson of the sword, great grandson of the sword, and so on†.

Nadir Shah then ransacked the imperial palace. He acquired all the crown jewells worth fifty krors including the Peacock Throne, the Koh-e-Noor diamond, entire cash in treasury amounting to 60 lakhs of rupees and several thousand gold coins, golden wares to the value of one kror, even the private property of the queens and princesses, richest clothing and furniture, precious carpets and rugs, valuable utensils, 300 elephants, 10,000 camels, and 10,000 horses.‡

After the royal family came the turn of the nobles. Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan was ordered to stand in the sun, and thus forced to pay one kror of rupees, jewellery, horses and elephants. Diwan Majlisrai was publicly disgraced and one of his ears was cut off. He committed suicide. The *vakil* of the Governor of Bengal was beaten in the Darbar, and he together with all the members of his family took poison.

The common people were also fleeced simultaneously. All the houses were counted under the supervision of the Turkish military police. Lists of property both moveable and immoveable were prepared. Every citizen was summoned to the police station to inquire the amount at which he had been assessed, and to pay it at once. The city was divided into five wards, each under charge of Nizam-ul-mulk, Qamr-ud-din Khan, Azimullah Khan, Murtaza Khan and Sarbuland Khan. The Mohallas in charge of Wazir

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*Ashab, ii, 375.

†Lockhart, 151.

‡Anandram, 51; Hanway, 383.

Qamr-ud-din Khan escaped repression and torture as the Wazir himself paid the major portion of ransom. Nizam also treated his wards leniently. In the remaining three sections sufferings of the people exceeded all bounds. Delay in payment proved dangerous. Houses were dug up in search of buried hoards. Their inmates were insulted and tortured. Numerous persons destroyed themselves either by the dagger or by poison, or by jumping into wells inside their houses. "No barbarities were left unpractised. The tax imposed was strictly exacted."*.

The total amount of plunder secured by Nadir Shah is estimated by Frazer at seventy krors, and by the author of *Bayan* at eighty krors. Nadir also annexed all the territory to the west of the Indus including cis-Indus districts of Chahar Mahal assessed at twenty lakhs a year. Nadir left Delhi on 5 May 1739.

This foreign irruption was not an end in itself. The example set by the master was not lost on his apt servant Ahmad Abdali, who repeated Nadir's exploits with greater vigour and violence†.

SHAH GARDI

(1) 17 January—22 February 1757

Ahmad Shah Durrani was invited to invade India in 1756 by Emperor Alamgir II, Najib-ud-daulah Rohilla of Saharanpur, and the Mughlani Begam of Lahore. The Afghan advance-guard under Jahan Khan occupied Luni and besieged Shahdara on 17 January 1757‡. *Khutba* in Durrani's name was read in the Jama Masjid on Friday, 21 January§. On 22 January Faulad Khan, the city Kotwal and Durrani's plenipotentiary Najib-ud-daulah issued a proclamation that Ahmad Shah was coming, and nobody should sit on house roofs nor in balconies, none should come on the roadside, and shops should remain closed¶.

On 27 January Emperor Alamgir II went out to receive the invader, and immediately on entering the city "the Mughalia troops of Abdali took to plunder"‖. Afghan troops ravaged all the

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**Frazer*, 199; *Hanway*, ii, 382; *Irvine*, ii, 372-3.
†Gupta, *Later Mughal History of the Panjab*, 32-3.
‡*Delhi Chronicle*, dated 17-1-1757.
§*Ibid*, dated 21-1-1757.
¶*Ibid*, 22-1-1757.
‖*Ibid*, 27-1-1757. [Also see *supra*, 80–82.]

houses lying outside the city on 28 January*. On 29 January shops and bazars were again sacked. Jahan Khan's soldiers squeezed Firoz Shah Kotla and the bazar near Kabuli Gate. On the same day Hindus were ordered to paint their foreheads†. Coins in Durrani's name were stamped at the imperial mint on 30 January. The same day Durrani married his son Timur Shah to the daughter of Alamgir II‡. The house of the late Wazir Qamr-ud-din was dug up on 4 February, and about one hundred beautiful wives of his son Intizam-ud-daulah, himself an ex-Wazir, were carried away§. On 7 February the house of Mir Bakhshi Samsam-ud-daulah was dug up. Further digging up of other houses continued¶. Plundering of people by Afghan and Rohilla soldiery went on. "All the days and nights cries of distress continued." ‖ *Mohallas* were burnt on 16 February.@ On 22 February Durrani crossed the Jamuna. In the city there were shouts of "safety, safety", and of gaining a second life. People offered congratulations (*Mubarak-badi*) to each other≠.

Ahmad Shah also fleeced the common people after his soldiers' loot. The entire city was divided into wards, and in each ward military posts were established . All the houses were numbered, and a regular levy was imposed on each. It was as a rule beyond the capacity of a person to pay. Abusing, beating, torturing, and slaying were frequently resorted to. Burns and wounds were inflicted on their bodies. Many persons took poison, and women drowned themselves in wells. People offered to sell their gold, silver and other property, but there were no buyers. Pure gold was sold at 8 to 10 rupees a *tola* of 180 grains, silver from 2 to 3 *tolas* a rupee, utensils at 3 kilograms for a rupee. No man escaped punishment, and no young woman defilement . Those who satisfied the first demand without demur were called upon to pay a second call. After meeting the requirement of the Shah, the

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Delhi Chronicle, 28–1–1757.
†*Ibid*, 29–1–1757.
‡*Ibid*, 30–1–1757.
§*Ibid*, 4–2–1757.
¶*Ibid*, 7, 8–2–1757.
‖*Ibid*, 15–2–1757.
@*Ibid*, 16–2–1757.
≠*Ibid*, 22–2–1757.

collectors squeezed the rest. This terror of extortion and chastisement reigned supreme from 4 to 20 February 1757*.

(2) 31 March-10 April 1757

The imperial capital was sacked again. On 30 March Durrani lay encamped at Faridabad. On 31 March the Shah and his army moved to the open plain lying beyond Sarai Basant Khan and Sarai Suhail. At this place Durrani forcibly married 16 year old maiden daughter of Emperor Muhammad Shah on 5 April. During this period the vast Afghan army entered the city, plundered the people, extorted money under torture, and carried away thosuands of handsome boys and pretty girls to their camp. Emperor Alamgir while bidding farewell to the Shah in this camp begged the invader to grant liberty to all these captives. The Shah granted the Emperor's request, and several thousands of prisoners were set free. On 8-10 April Sahiba Mahal, mother of Hazrat Begam, came from the Shah's camp on a final visit to the city to remove her property. She was escorted by 2,000 Durrani musketeers. They again plundered the bazars and streets and took many captives†.

(3) 14-27 January 1760

Ahmad Shah Durrani's fifth invasion took place at the invitation of Emperor Alamgir II, Najib-ud-daulah, and the great theologian of Delhi, Shah Waliullah‡. Having defeated and slain Dattaji Sindhia at Barari Ghat on 9 January 1760, Ahmad Shah marched to Delhi, and stayed there from 14 to 27 January 1760.

The well-known Urdu poet Mir Dard, who was the head of the Chishti family and spiritual leader of the religious order of Naqshbands was at this time living in his sanctuary. He gives a graphic account of the Afghan and Rohilla atroctities in the city.

"I was present in the city. In the evening (14 January) it was announced that the Shah had granted amnesty and that nobody should worry. But immediately after nightfall these freebooters commenced committing atrocities. The city was set on fire. Houses were destroyed. They carried off every thing. The following morning was the doomsday. All the Durrani and Rohilla armies

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Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani, 100b-101a; *Sarkar*, ii, 101-2; *Ganda Singh*, 167-8.

†*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 111a—112b, 115a; *Sarkar*, ii, 129-30.

‡For details see *Supra*, 118-22.

fell upon the city, and carried fire and sword through it. They broke open the gates of the city, and took people captives. A large number of them were burnt alive. Many were beheaded, and subjected to all sorts of tyranny. They continued with their atrocities for three days and nights. No victuals and clothing were left. The roofs and walls of houses were demolished. Every body was afflicted with grief. They were tyranising on all sides. The good people were being ruined. The nobles were distressed. The rich were reduced to poverty, and became destitute even for a draught of water. The secluded were rendered homeless. Nawabs were reduced to beggary. The nobles became naked. The family members were scattered. Everybody was involved in trouble. All men were wandering in bazars and streets. Their women and children were captives. The plunderers were crowded in the city and murder continued unchecked. The people were in a pitiable condition. They got tired of life. They were wounded, abused and deprived of their cash and clothing. Many died of these hardships. All lost their honour and chastity. A large part of the city was burnt to ashes. Some improvement was expected on the third day. But then came Anzala Khan *Na qchi*. Whatever was left, it was plundered by him. Eventually the administrators turned out the plunderers, and adopted some preventive measures. The cruel freebooters started looting the old city. A large number of people were put to the sword. This state of affairs continued for seven or eight days. Nobody had anything to cover his body and satisfy his hunger. Men were bare-headed and women uncovered. Since all the ways were blocked, many people succumbed to their injuries. A large number of them died of bitter cold. This army looted the city without any sense of shame. The citizens were dishonoured. They seized foodgrains by force and sold them at high prices to the poor. The tumult of these plunderers reached the seventh heaven"*.

Mir gives a very long account of the city and then describes his own street. No familiar face was to be seen there with whom he could talk or sit for a while . He saw only a bird. Mir asked it what it knew about the dwellers of the locality. It replied, "Alas ! Alas‡!"

**Mir ki Ap Biti*, 121-3.

†*Ibid*, 137-8.

"*Uftad guzarm cho ba wiranch-e-Tos,*
Didam chande nishashta bar ja-e-kharos,
Guftam cheh khabardari azin wiranah ?
Gufta khabar in ast keh afsos, afsos !" [*Mir ki Ap Biti, 138.*]

(4) 29 February–23 March 1760

Ahmad Shah Durrani raised his camp at Khizarabad on 27 January 1760, and entered Surajmal's territory in order to realize tribute from the Jat Raja. He invested the Jat fort of Dig on 6 February. On finding it almost impregnable, he left this place, and marched in pursuit of Malharrao Holkar towards Narnaul. He returned to Khizarabad on 29 February 1760 "and plundered the people of Delhi to an extreme*."

Tahmas Khan Miskin was then present in Delhi. He gives picturesque details of the Afghan and Rohilla pillage of this city which he saw with his own eyes. He writes: "Next day the whole of the Durrani army entered the city, and started looting and murdering the people. I marched towards Durrani's camp in the company of my five brothers. Fortunately we were not detained by the Durrani soldiers. But one thousand horsemen were there to watch over the city. They seized our horses and other belongings. They were going to kill us, when some one suggested that we should be taken to the city to point out the houses of wealthy people. We reached the city. They asked me to show them the houses of rich men. I tried my level best not to tell them anything in this connection, but they threatened me. Ultimately I had to show them a big house, as there was no way out of this difficulty. They at once broke down the gate of this house and entered it. I jumped from the roof of this house into another street. With great difficulty, I got at a big palace near that street. It was guarded by a contingent of *nasqchis*. They said in Turkish language, "Destroy this palace also". As soon as I heard it, I fled to the Emperor's army which was encamped near Luni. My brother Muqim Beg accompanied me"†.

Tahmas Khan Miskin further adds: "The Afghan army in conjunction with Najib Khan Rohilla committed such atrocities as cannot be described. A large number of people were slaughtered ruthlessly. Thousands of men and women wandered in the bazars and streets terror-stricken and horrified, and did not dare enter their houses. Many of them were captured by the plunderers. The whole city was ruined. The shops lay open and desolated"‡.

**Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 178.

†*Miskin*, 204-5.

‡*Ibid*, 207.

(5) 29 January—22 March 1761

After his victory at Panipat on 14 January 1761, Ahmad Shah Durrani marched upon the imperial capital. During the three earlier months, the people of the city had led a life of fear and terror on account of frequent rumours of the Shah's advance towards Delhi. On the conquest of Kunjpura by Bhau in October 1760, it was recorded that "throughout this entire month a state of death settled on the city from rumours of the coming of the Shah, who had decided on a battle near Kunjpura"*.

The news of Shah's advance sent a thrill of horror into Delhi. Supplies immediately ceased coming to the city, and "grain became extremely dear". Naro Shankar, the Maratha Governor of the capital, found it almost impossible to maintain his position. The Muslim population of the city rose against him, and raised a huge tumult. Naro Shankar decided upon flight. He cleared all the arrears of Habish Khan, the Abyssinian Darogha of the Red Fort, and his garrison. He bribed the Queen-mother and ex-Empress Zinat Mahal with 3½ lakhs of rupees in cash and costly property which he could not carry away to the Deccan. Naro Shankar then managed to escape with his family and property in safety.

Zinat Mahal received Ahmad Shah Durrani at Narela, 26 kilometres north of Delhi. She congratulated the visitor and offered him a *nazar* of one lakh of rupees, and fifty thousand rupees to Shah Vali Khan. Durrani entered the city on 29 January 1761. He put up in the apartments of Mumtaz Mahal, and allowed his soldiers 1½ month's relaxation and enjoyment after one year's hard life spent at the camp and in fighting. The Afghan soldiers lived on the inhabitants, and plundered them to their heart's content. Ahmad Shah left the Red Fort on 20 March, and encamped in the Shalimar Garden for two days. He set out on his return journey on 22 March 1761†.

JAT GARDI

9 May–4 June 1753

A civil war between Emperor Ahmad Shah and his Wazir, Safdar Jang, continued from March to November 1753. The first stage of the struggle lasted from 26 March to 8 May 1753. No

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**Delhi Chronicle*, dated 19-10-1760.

†For details see *Ghulam Ali*, ii, 186-8; *SPD*, ii, 142; xxi, 202; *Delhi Chronicle*; *Sarkar*, ii, 374-6.

fighting took place during this period. Both sides tried to win over allies, Marathas, Rohillas and Jats. Eventually, the first two joined the Emperor, while the Jats under Surajmal sided with Safdar Jang. Fighting took place in the second stage, 9 May to 4 June 1753. On the very first day of warfare, the Jats plundered old Delhi. Its population numbered as much as that of the new city called Shahjahanabad. They first turned their attention to the houses situated outside the Red Gate of New City and the adjoining Grain Market. These areas were inhabited mostly by traders, merchants, and poor people. They were thoroughly sacked and women were outraged. "Nobody could escape from the Jat free-booters even by taking shelter in a holy man's abode"*. A large number of people killed themselves to save their honour and avoid torture. On 10 May the Jats ravaged Abdullahnagar close to Jaisinghpura, Tarkaganj, Sayyidwara and the region around Bijal mosque. "The Jats plundered upto the gate of the city, lakhs and lakhs were looted, the houses were demolished, and all the suburbs (puras) and Churania and Wakilpura were rendered totally lampless"†.

Many people managed to escape within the walled city of Shahjahanabad. "All the people of old Delhi and other suburbs fled to the New City with whatever property they could carry off; and the inhabitants of the New City, too, in fear of plunder, carried their valuables on their persons. They roamed from house to house, lane to lane, in despair and bewilderment, like a wrecked ship tossing on the waves; every one was running about like a lunatic distracted, puzzled and unable to take care of himself". Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes: "All the bazars, lanes and houses were crammed with refugees. The Emperor very considerately ordered the Sahibabad garden (in Chandni Chauk), the Garden of Thirty Thousand, and other gardens and houses belonging to his Government to be vacated and given up to the people who wished to live in them. Vast crowds of people high and low went there. Shopkeepers and artisans set up booths in them and engaged in their trades"‡.

**Siyar*, iii, 48.

†*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 55b; *Bayan*, 278-9; *Shakir*, 74; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 410a; quoted in *Sakar*, i, 271.

‡*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Sharhi*, 54b; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 410b; *Sarkar*, i, 272; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 71; *Siyar*, iii, 47-8.

Sujan Charit covers 14 pages in praise of these nefarious exploits of the Jats.

The Jats continued their plundering activities almost every day during this period which in consequence came to be called the period of Jat *Gardi*.

GUJAR GARDI, BALUCH GARDI & ROHILLA GARDI

(1) June 1753

During this civil war in May 1753, Imad-ul-mulk recruited a large army of Mughalia troops known as the Sindagh brigade of Badakhshi soldiers. Its number in the beginning was 23,000. He also enlisted 15,000 Rohillas under Najib Khan. A Gujar regiment of 2,000 under Jit Singh Gujar also joined him on 2 June 1753*. A Baluch regiment of about 2,000 under Bahadur Khan, who was later created a baron of Bahadurgarh in Rohtak District was also enlisted. All these troops were set upon Wazir Safdar Jang and his supporters living in the city. They plundered vast numbers of people. No man's wealth and no woman's honour remained safe from these brigands†.

As all these fresh levies failed to receive their salaries regularly, they resorted to disobedience of Imad-ul-mulk. The Rohillas, Baluch and Gujar troopers took to plundering people in August–September 1753‡. Of this vast army of 80,000 men, "almost everyday some regiment or other of unpaid soldiers left their trenches and rioted in the streets of Delhi"§.

ROHILLA GARDI

(2) November-December 1753

The wages of a Rohilla horseman were fixed at the rate of Rs. $\frac{3}{4}$ and of an infantryman at Rs $\frac{1}{4}$ daily. In September 1753 the Emperor owed to Rohillas a sum of 25 lakhs of rupees, and he paid only 4 lakhs to them. For 15 lakhs of rupees revenues were assigned to Najib in the Ganga Doab. Najib and his men left Delhi on 26 November 1753. "But immediately after crossing the Jamuna they invested Patparganj and seizing the headman of the place demanded lakhs of Rupees from that mart and beat him; they did the same thing at Shahdara, and after forcibly occupying

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**Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 56b.

†*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 55b-59a; *Chahar Gulzar-e-Shujai*, 411b; *Bayan*, 279; *Imad-us-Saadat*, 64; *Siyar*, iii, 47.

‡*Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 70b—72b.

§*Sarkar*, i, 281.

the toll-offices (*naka*) on the river bank robbed the wayfarers. They left Patparganj only after taking Rs. 35,000"*.

(3) 11 August 1757

On this day Najib's Rohillas plundered the mansion-house of Wazir Imad-ul-mulk, deliberately violated the chastity of all the women, and ravaged the neighbouring *mohallas*†.

Besides Najib-ud-daulah and his 20,000-25,000 troops invariably joined Ahmad Shah Durrani in plundering Delhi and other places.

MARATHA GARDI

(1) Bajirao's unexpected jump on the environs of Delhi, April 1737

Peshwa Bajirao marched to the north towards the close of winter in 1736. His Maratha horsemen gathered in large numbers in Bundelkhand in March 1737. To check the Marathas two armies advanced from Delhi. S'aadat Khan, Nawab of Avadh, and Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur were ordered to join them. The Mir Bakhshi Samsam-ud-daulah left the capital on 9 March, and Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan on 21 March.

Bajirao, lightly equipped, attacked Bhadawar. Its chief Anurudh Singh shut himself up in his fortress of Ater. After some time he made peace by parting with twenty lakhs of rupees and ten elephants. The Maratha advance-guard crossed the Jamuna and plundered Firozabad, Itimadpur and Jalesar. S'aadat Khan at the head of fifty thousand horsemen completely routed them on 23 March, and took about one thousand Marathas prisoners‡.

After this Malhar joined Bajirao near Gwalior, and S'aadat Khan united with Samsam-ud-daulah at Mathura. The Peshwa's agent Dhondopant in Samsam's camp reported the lofty boasts of S'aadat Khan about his recent victory. This touched the young Bajirao's pride. Determined to show that he was still active and kicking, he resolved to march upon the Mughal capital. With lightning rapidity he rushed leaving the camps of the Wazir and the Mir Bakhshi on each side, and arrived at Kalkaji 10 kilometres south of Delhi on 9 April. This news reached Mir Bakhshi when he and S'aadat Khan were deep in the midst of festivities of a grand banquet at Agra.

**Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 67a, 87a—88b, 121a, translation by *Sarkar*, i, 286.

†For details vide *Supra*, 108.

‡*Khushhalchand, 107b; Rutam Ali, 270b; Ashob, 112a; Irvine, ii, 286-7.*

Bajirao captured some elephants and camels sent out for grazing and plundered the temple. He encamped for the night at Talkatora, 5 kilometres from the city.

The plundered priests and wounded pilgrims went to the Emperor to complain. "The Emperor and his courtiers laughed at them." They declared that the victims had taken thieves for Marathas. To verify their statement a Hindu in the guise of a mendicant was sent to the Maratha camp in the evening. Before the Emperor he poured from his begging bowl, a handful of dry unsplit gram, some pieces of half-cooked unsalted *bajra* bread, and a few red chillies. This was all he had received as alms in the Maratha camp even from Sardars. He told the Emperor that the Marathas were contemplating to attack the city early next morning*.

There were 10,000 horse and 20,000 foot in the fort. An action was fought at Rikabganj in which the imperial troops were worsted. The Mughals lost 600 men in killed and wounded, 2,000 horses and one elephant†.

Meanwhile Wazir Qamr-ud-din Khan was hurrying towards Delhi. Bajirao checked his advance at Badshahpur, 33 kilometres south-west of the city and 10 kilometres south of the spot where Gurgaon railway station now stands. The Peshwa followed by his mistress Mastani "seated on one saddle cover" on a tall horse "riding stirrup to stirrup with him"‡, as seen by Ashob's two elder brothers fighting in Janish Khan's corps under the Wazir, delivered the assault. He lost thirty men. Finding himself unequal to the Wazir's army, and fearing the combination of Samsam-ud-daulah and S'aadat Khan with the Wazir, he slipped away from the field early in the night, this being the seventh day of the dark half of the moon, on 10 April. By the following daybreak he had reached Kot Putli, 155 kilometres away from Delhi§.

(2) 25 April—4 May 1752

Safdar Jang had brought a Maratha army of fifty thousand horsemen on a promise to pay them a subsidy of fifty lakhs of rupees. This army reached Delhi on 25 April 1752. The Emperor declined

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*_Ashob_, 113a—b; _Rustam Ali_, 272b—273a; _Irvine_, ii, 289-90.

†For details see _Ashob_, 114b—119a; _Rustam Ali_, 273b; _Irvine_, ii, 291-4.

‡Mastani fought in the battlefield like a Maratha horseman. She was skilful "in horsemanship, spear-throwing and sword play." [_Irvine_, ii, 297, f.n.]

§_Ashob_, 119b—124b; _Irvine_, ii, 295-7.

to pay them. The Marathas commenced devastating the environs of Delhi. "Thousands were ruined by their oppression and the surrounding country was desolated. On the west bank of the Jamuna, towards Badli, and other places, not a village remained unplundered". A terror prevailed in the city. Many people sent their families away. As the Peshwa summoned them to the Deccan, the Maratha leaders on receiving a few lakhs of rupees retired from the capital on 4 May 1752*.

(3) Khanderao, November-December 1753

Khanderao son of Malharrao Holkar arrived at Delhi on 21 November 1753. As usual his troops lived on plundering the people. He was induced to see the Emperor who granted him a robe of honour, and tried to persuade him to leave the capital. The Emperor said: "I had called you only to assist me in fighting Safdar Jang. Now that by the grace of God that business is over, I give you conge to return home. When I need you again, I shall summon you." Khanderao replied: "I am now under your blessed feet, and wish to remain here". In the beginning of January 1754 Khanderao moved his camp to Hodal, and then to Kumbher†.

(4) May-June 1754

After plundering the imperial camp and raping royal ladies and their attendants at Sikandarabad on the night of 25-26 May 1754‡, the Maratha advance-guard of 20,000 horse advanced upon Delhi. On 31 May they plundered Jaisinghpura and the neighbouring colonies situated to the south-west of the city. Another Maratha contingent ravaged the area in the proximity of Nizam-ud-din Aulia's shrine, and destroyed the Khurma mart. At this time the Marathas were on friendly terms with the Mughal court as the Emperor had acceded to all their demands. Mir Bakhshi Imad-ul-mulk approached Malharrao and asked, "What is this?" The great Maratha leader replied: "These are soldiers. They always do so". Imad-ul-mulk drew out his dagger, and placing it before Malhar, in a helpless tone shouted, "Either slay me, or withdraw your hand from such work". Malharrao thereupon rode out,

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Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi, 33b—37b; *Siyar*, iii, 44; *Sarkar*, i, 205, 207.

†*Ibid*, 99b—100b; translation by *Sarkar*, i, 290.

‡For details see *Supra*, 22-4.

and stopped his men from carrying fire and sword. But the mischief had been done. "The suburbs became totally ruined and desolate like the homes of the dead, at the hands of these unclean people*."

(5) Raghunathrao at Delhi, June-December 1754

Peshwa's younger brother, Raghunathrao, arrived at Delhi on 1 June 1754. He helped Imad-ul-mulk in getting prime ministership, and then in changing the Emperor. The Maratha general thereupon demanded the tribute promised by Imad-ul-mulk. As no money was forthcoming, Raghunath stayed in the capital for seven months, changing his camp from place to place around Delhi. Entire supply of food, fodder and fuel became exhausted. At first Raghunath's camp was fixed at Patparganj, 10 kilometres south-east of the city on the other side of the Jamuna. On 17 June he crossed over the river, and encamped in the Shalimar Garden, 10 kilometres north-west of the Lahori Gate.

In this region the Maratha soldiers exercised oppression on the neighbouring Jat villages, mostly of Dahiya clan. The freedom-loving Jats would seize in revenge Maratha mares grazing in their fields. Malharrao attacked their villages including Jalalpur, Nahra, Nahri, and many others. He plundered their property, and sold it cheap in Delhi. The Jats complained to the Emperor and his Wazir, but nothing came out of it.

From there he moved to Basai, the Idgah, Majnu Faqir's place and Wazirabad. On 17 September Raghunath transferred his camp to the south where he lived up to 9 December 1754, changing places frequently from Badarpur *nala* to Tughlaqabad Tank of Kishandas, Islampur, 5 kilometres of Humayun's tomb, Mahrauli, Barapula and Chaharbagh. Malharrao resided at Hiran Minar, Jinsi Topkhana, Palam, Talkatora, Hauz-e-Khas, Shah Mardan and Haidar Ganj†.

On 9 December the Maratha camp was shifted to Jitpur, 3 kilometres east of Badarpur. The Maratha troopers pillaged all the houses situated near the ferry on the Jamuna. They did not spare even the Brahmans sitting on the *ghat*, and the travellers who were crossing the river on their way to Patparganj. Raghunath crossed the Jamuna and lay encamped opposite Okhla for a fortnight.

**Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 131b—134b; translation by *Sarkar*, i, 303.

†*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 16b—17a; *SPD*, xxvii, 79.

The neighbouring marts and surrounding villages were all ruined as timber was removed from houses to serve as firewood. Supply of grain to the city from this side completely ceased. On 25 December 1754 Raghunath marched towards Garhmukteshwar, while Malhar came to Hauz-e-Khas and in the beginning of January 1755 advanced towards Rewari*.

(6) Antaji's exactions, January 1757

On the approach of Durrani towards Delhi in the beginning of January 1757, the rich people of the city both Hindus and Muslims sent away their families to Mathura and beyond in the Jat country. Wazir Imad-ul-mulk's family went to Rajasthan. But he would not allow the common people to leave. He ordered Antaji Mankeshwar with the help of his 3,000 Maratha horsemen to stop the exodus. He closed all exits; and when they wanted to return to their homes, they were deprived of all their cash and jewellery. Those who managed to escape, had to pay heavy exactions to the Jats in order to secure a safe passage†.

Later in the month after the arrival of the Durrani forces in the capital, Antaji kept on roving in the south, west and north-west of the city and plundered people. On 1 February 1757, Antaji was completely routed and he fled to Mathura‡.

(7) 11 August 1757

When fighting was going on in the capital between Marathas and Najib, many parts of old Delhi were plundered by Marathas.§ A few days later the area of Sabzi Mandi, another scene of fighting, was pillaged by Malhar¶.

(8) 14 January 1758

The Marathas under Dattaji Sindhia plundered Shahdara and many villages lying to the north-west of Delhi‖. On 19 January they pillaged Sarai Rohilla and the outer suburbs of the Delhi Gate⸸.

Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani, 35b—36a.
†*Ibid*, 87a—88a.
‡*Sarkar*, ii, 112-4.
§*Ibid*, 146.
¶*Ibid*, 148.
‖*Ibid*, 201.
⸸*Ibid*.

MUGHAL GARDI

Imad-ul-mulk's forced levies on citizens, June-October 1754

(1) Imad-ul-mulk had promised the Marathas a tribute of Rs. 40 lakhs; while his own troops and the Emperor's establishment were also to be paid. A sum of three lakhs of rupees was fleeced from some nobles and their women folk by depriving them of their personal cash and jewellery. Several other persons were also subjected to heavy exactions. This amount was paid to the Marathas on 10 June 1754.

(2) Imad then decided to raise money by imposing forced levies upon the citizens of Delhi. First of all traders and artisans were compelled to pay by posting military police before their houses. Thousands of these people stood under the Jharoka and cried for justice. The Emperor spoke to the Wazir who would not yield. The victims of aggression again demanded justice. The Emperor took pity on the people, and threatened to go on a fast to death. Thereupon the Wazir called back his men towards the end of June 1754*.

(3) The Marathas clamoured for their dues. The Emperor yielded to exactions. On 7 September 1754, the whole city was divided into wards. Lists of houses and their occupants were prepared. Collectors assisted by soldiers were appointed. Aristocracy escaped owing to their influence. The poor people also escaped owing to the Emperor's instructions. It was decided to realize only two rupees from each man, but in practice the business community had to pay from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 each. In this way only one lakh of rupees could be collected.†

(4) The amount of collection being extremely insufficient, a fresh contribution was demanded. People were beaten up and tortured. Shops were closed. Thousands of men loudly complained to the Emperor against these frequent exactions and application of torture. The Emperor again prevailed upon the Wazir to stop these collections, and peace came to the city on 20 October 1754‡.

**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 9b—11b.

†*Ibid*, 17a—19a.

‡*Ibid*, 25a—b.

TURK GARDI

(1) March-April 1754

The imperial army as a rule during this period was never regularly paid, and was always for years, not to speak of months, in arrears. This factor greatly affected their morale, and converted a fine soldiery into a rabble. The Turkish troops who were the best fighters invariably resorted to plunder. This sort of lawlessness continued throughout this period to a greater or a lesser degree. Here a brief mention of only one year's incidents will suffice to afford a glimpse into the state of affairs in the capital. The salary of the Sin-dagh *risala* had remained unpaid for one year. On 20 March 1754, they began to plunder Hindu shopkeepers, in particular jewellers. All the rich persons were seized by these soldiers, and were released on securing ransom on 8-9 April. They pillaged the customs posts, and everybody on whom they could lay their hands. None of the employees in the fort could come out to eat meals, and they remained without food for one day and night. The Emperor remained trembling with fear all the time. They created a great row near Jama Masjid and in Faiz Bazar, and slew many people. A large quantity of property was captured, and numerous houses were destroyed by fire in Khari Baoli and Khas Bazar. No trader or merchant or a rich banker escaped their atrocities*.

(2) June 1754

The Maratha claims had been satisfied partly by cash payment and partly by assignment of territory. But the Mughalia troops and the palace employees were paid nothing. Their three years' salary was in arrears. They plundered houses everyday. The Muslim nobles defended their residences with the help of their retainers. Only the business and industrial class, mainly Hindus, remained exposed to the attacks of Turkish soldiery†.

(3) On 21 June 1754 the Wazir's artillery soldiers surrounded his mansion-house, roughly handled his superintendent Aqibat Mahmud, and tore off his clothes. They returned on the receipt of

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**Tarikh-e-Ahmad Shahi*, 115b, 119b, 121a—124a, 125a, 127a; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 85-6.

†*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 20b.

an order on a banker. Imad got angry with Aqibat, and put him to death in the night. On 22 June other troopers raised a tumult before his house. They blocked all the bazars and streets, and ill-treated the passers-by.

(4) The soldiers again displayed rowdyism on 10 August 1754. The palace servants threw stones on the Finance Minister, Raja Nagarmal on 14 August. The Raja's deputy Kishanchand Sud was forcibly carried off by Badakhshi soldiers to Mughalpura. He was suspended from the roof by the legs, and tortured for 15 days. Neither Emperor nor the Wazir came to his rescue.

On 3 September the Badakhshis plundered the house of Muzaffar Khan's brother-in-law. On 4 September a Badakhshi soldier fired upon the Wazir but he escaped unhurt. On 5 September the fort musketeers closed the palace gates, and stopped the coming and going of the people. After this, the Sin-dagh troops resorted to violence on the people, dragged away their women, and let them off for a ransom. They pillaged the houses of Hakumatrai and Thakurdas, superintendents of Emperor's harem, and disgraced them. They besieged Imad's house on 23 October, pulled their paymaster out of the palanquin, and abused him. The Badakhshi troops again revolted on 14 November and plundered Nagarmal's house. The Diwan took shelter in the Maratha camp. On 18 November they plundered the bazars situated around Jama Masjid and Qudsia Masjid. Towards the end of this month they prevented Wazir's grandmother, Sholapuri Begam, from entering Wazir's house; and when he came to receive her, he was abused. Early in December, they forcibly entered the Wazir's mansion, made their way straight into his kitchen and seized all victuals*.

(5) These lawless activities continued throughout the first half of 1755. The worst scene of this sad drama was played at Panipat on 3 May 1755. The Wazir was staying in the biggest mansion in the city. His Badakhshi troops numbering about 250 gathered at the gate of his residence, and raised a tumult. This being a very hot day Imad was dressing after a bath. On hearing the noise, half dressed as he was, he came to the gate to inquire about it. He was immediately seized. They dragged him on foot

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*For details see *Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 16b, 17b, 18a, 20 a-b, 22b, 26a-b, 29b, 30a—32b, 37b.

through the streets and bazars of the city, abusing and insulting and occasionally beating him up to a distance of $3\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres to their camp. He was surrounded by thousands of his Turkish troops. They tore his garments, called him names, made him sit on the ground, and harassed him for about two hours*.

(6) Occasional outbursts of soldiers' rowdy behaviour took place as before. Samsam-ud-daulah, the Mir Bakhshi, died on 23 July 1756. The soldiers stopped his burial until promise was made to clear their arrears. The musketeers of the fort garrison closed all the gates of the fort, and demanded their dues. They planted cannon at the city gates, and brought it under their control. They did not allow people to say Friday prayer in the Jama Masjid on 23 July†.

(7) Emperor Alamgir II lay encamped on this day at Luni. He called two of his wives to join him. The palace was under control of the artillerymen. The poor ladies dressed themselves as maid servants, put on an ordinary *burqa*, and walked out of the fort. Then they wore the dress of the women of a water carrier and rode on his bullocks. Thus they reached the Emperor's camp. Alamgir II, instead of being ashamed, thoroughly enjoyed their artifice‡. On 29 August 1756 they cut off all supplies to the fort, and starved the members and servants of the royal family for a day§. One day Shakir Khan, diwan of Crown Prince Ali Gauhar, later known as Emperor Shah Alam II, brought an earthen mug of broth from a charitable kitchen for his master. The prince ordered him to send it into the *harem* where royal ladies had not lighted fire in the kitchen for three days. The continued starvation was not tolerated by the young princesses for a long time. They threw off their veils and rushed out of the palace to beg food in the public streets. The gates of the fort were closed upon them, and they sat in men's quarters for a day and a night crying and bewailing¶.

**Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 48b-51a; *Sarkar*, 79; *Tarikh-e-Muzaffari*, 109-10; *Siyar*, iii, 52; *Sarkar*, ii, 45-6.

†*Tarikh-e-Alamgir Sani*, 75b—76a.

‡*Ibid*, 76b—78a.

§*Ibid*, 78b—79a.

¶*Ibid*, 190a-b.

Sauda's observations

Sauda, the famous Urdu poet, was born and brought up at Delhi. He was patronized by Wazir Imad-ul-mulk. Ahmad Shah Durrani crushed the power of Imad, and he was reduced to poverty. The Afghans, Rohillas and Marathas plundered the city so severely and so frequently that Sauda also felt compelled to leave the imperial capital about 1760. Many of Sauda's poems enable us to have a glimpse into the political, administrative and general conditions of Delhi during this period. His two poems entitled "Shahar-e-Ashob" (a grief-stricken city) are a fine specimen of the poet's keen observation and personal experience. It is a long and querulous ode, and presents a vivid picture of the general poverty of aristocracy and the fallen splendour of nobility. The poems present to us in a superb manner a true picture of the social, economic and cultural condition of the people. The inability and maladministration of the rulers of the country have been depicted in such a way that the real scene of the degradation of that age comes before our eyes. About the nobles Sauda says: "If a visitor called upon them, they would see him only if they were in a mood to do so. If he talked about politics, they would turn their faces to another side, and would ask him to talk of something else". [*Khuda ke waste Bhai kuchh aur baten bol.*]

The condition of the wealthy classes like *jagirdars* and *naqdigirs* is thus described: "The *naqdigirs* and *jagirdars* are in such a wretched state that they have sold their swords and shields to the shopkeepers. They do not come out of their houses with arms. They have a staff under arms, and the begging bowl in hand." [*Baghal ke bich to sonta hai, hath men kachkol.*]

The nobility of the lower rank equally suffered . Sauda says that formerly their houses were lit with chandeliers but now not even an earthen lamp could be seen. In place of palanquins (*chandol*) their womenfolk could not afford even a litter (*doli*). Their daughters, clad in a veil and with a rosy-cheeked child in their arms, went about selling their youth and beauty. About the lofty buildings of the capital Sauda says: "The buildings are in such a lamentable condition that we feel depressed to look at them, while formerly their very sight was pleasing; instead of flower beds waist-deep long grass is standing. Pillars and parapets are lying in a dilapidated condition."*

*Shaikh Chand, *Sauda*, 268-9.

Faulad Khan had been serving as *kotwal* (city magistrate and police superintendent) for about twenty-five years previously. Sauda has written a lampoon on Faulad Khan, and has given a graphic description of the chaotic condition of the city. This poem gives a fascinating and touching account of the corruption of the Kotwal, his complicity with thieves, their boldness, and the disastrous consequences of his administration. The relations between the Kotwal and the thieves are reported in the form of a dialogue in verse. The Kotwal says: "All of you are my favourites. Now you should not go to the bazar to sell stolen goods. I shall buy them at a reasonable price." One of the thieves replies: "Sir, you have spoken justly. Let me tell you one thing. There are two customers for your turban. Each of them has offered me ten rupees for it. What will you pay me for it?" The other thief spoke: "I am your slave. I may not be able to steal your turban, as you may not take it off. Besides its price is debatable. But I have spent a sleepless night in order to steal your shawl. Take my labour into consideration, and pay me whatever you think it proper"*.

The poet tells us that theft was very common in the capital. People went to a liquor shop fully armed, as if they were bound for a battlefield. The reason was that the roads and streets were infested with thieves. The noise raised in the liquor house was not due to intoxication, but to the fear of thieves. The thieves appeared on their beat immediately after dusk. From evening till morning, there were shouts of thieves†. The people lodged complaints with the Kotwal, who paid no heed to them, and put them off by saying that everybody in society was a thief ‡.

Qasidah-e-Tazhik-e-Rozgar is apparently a lampoon upon a horse, but in reality it is an elegy of the Mughal army, presenting a portrait of useless soldiers and their worthless horses. In the introductory remarks the poet says that the nobles who formerly possessed stables of Iraqi and Arabian horses got their shoes mended on credit.

**Ibid*, 270-1.

†"*Sham se subah tak yahi hai shor,*
Dauryo gathri le chala hai chor,
Ankh to kis bashar ki lage hai,
Choron ke dar se fitna jage hai". (*Ibid*, 272.)

‡"*Kis ko marun main kis ko dun gali,*
Chori karne se kaun hai khali". (*Ibid*)

If anybody possessed a horse, it was starved to a skeleton. No gram and grass was given to it. It was so feeble that it could hardly stand. While passing through the bazar, the butcher and the cobbler inquired of the rider of this horse when it was expected to die*. The soldier rode on this horse, and got ready to march to fight the Marathas. He held whips in both the hands and the reins in his teeth. He wounded his feet by spurring the horse again and again. In front the syce was inducing it to move, and from behind another man was shouting and beating it with a staff. At this sight many people gathered there. Some suggested to put wheels in its feet to make it go, while others advised to tie sails to it so that it could fly. Ultimately the rider reached the battle-ground. He was so much frightened that he took off his slippers, held the horse's neck under his arm, and fled back to the city†. In another poem Sauda gives a comical description of the hazards and hardships endured by merchants, as they were tormented by the custom-house officials and attendants‡.

Reader ! can any one help shedding tears of blood at this sad and sorrowful drama we have just witnessed?

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*"*Qasab puchhta hai mujhe kab karoge yad,*
Umidwar ham bhi hain kahte hain yun chamar". (*Ibid*, 273.)

† *Ibid*, 275-6.

‡Ram Babu Saxena, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 64.

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1. **Panjab on the eve of First Sikh War**

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